Hugh Cecil Earl of Lonsdale.

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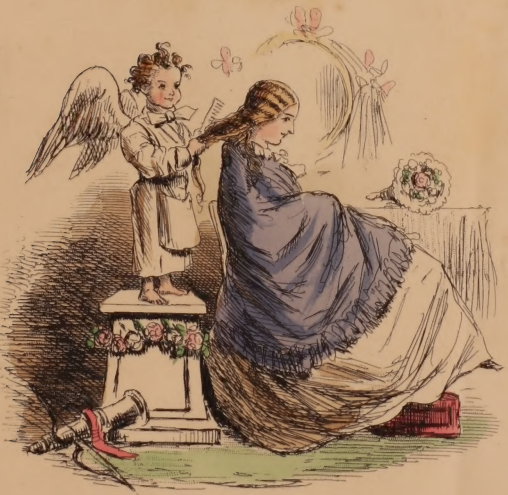
Mr. Bunting rejected.

PLAIN

OR

PRETTY



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1860.

"PLAIN OR RINGLETS?"

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "HANDLEY CROSS," "SPONGE'S SPORTING TOUR,"
"ASK MAMMA," ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN LEECH.

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BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

TO

MY DEAR SON

This Volume

IS INSCRIBED, WITH HIS FATHER'S BEST LOVE.

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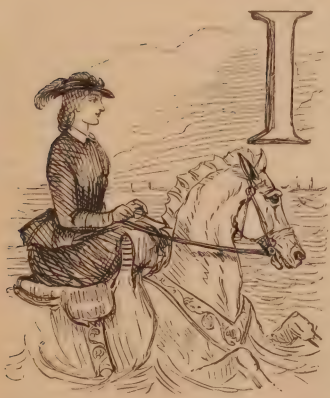
ERRATA.

Page 46, *for* pic-niceras, *read* pic-nicers.
320, *for* the fat one, *read* the fat ones.

"PLAIN OR RINGLETS?"

CHAPTER I.

ROSEBERRY ROCKS.



IT was the Comet year—a glorious summer hastened the seasons and forced the country into early maturity. The hay was "oop" before Giles Jolter generally gets it "doon;" the corn trod fast on the heels of the hay, and harvest-bitten M.P.'s magnified the aroma of the bouquet de mille sewers of the Thames, in order to get away to their turnips, their tares, and under shade of their umbrageous trees. All people rushed out of town that could get. The West End tradesmen alone looked blank, though many of them took wing also, and followed the broken coveys of company to their basking places in the provinces, there to respread the labyrinths of their allurements, revolve their white hands, show their white teeth, and simper blandly, "What's the next article mem?"

A real continental summer having visited England, people showed

their appreciation of the boon by making the most of the luxury. It was out-of-door life for every one—Turkey carpets, red curtains, fur cloaks, thick boots, umbrellas, no longer commanded respect, but were superseded by the lightest, airiest muslins, gossamers, and slippers. Coals, save for cooking purposes, might have been slates altogether, for anything that anybody cared. To seal a letter became an act of fortitude. Splashing and dabbling in the sea was the only way of keeping cool. All the watering-places swarmed to repletion. Thanks to George Stephenson, George Hudson, and the many other Georges, who invested their talents and valuable money in the invaluable undertakings, railways have brought wealth and salubrity to every one's door. It is no longer the class distribution that used to exist, this place for that set, that for another; but a sort of grand quadrille of gaiety in which people change places continually, and whirl about until they finally settle down, thoroughly satisfied with some particular selection. They then take the pet place under their wings, talk it up and run other places down, finding out beauties that none can see but themselves.

Large and looming as London is, and undeniably adapted for what we may call the great wholesale commerce and intercourse of life, it is, nevertheless, to these minor branch establishments that we are mainly indebted for lasting friendships and plain gold ring connections that have so much to do with the comforts and happiness of mankind. To put it in a sporting way, London is a capital cover to find the game in; but the country is the place to run it down. London has too many attractions, too much bustle and excitement, for quiet business-like intercourse; but down in the country, or at one of these sauntering, simpering watering-places—where people meet at every turn—they must come to, sooner or later, or run away for fear of being caught.

And here let us record our decided conviction, that of all watering-places under the sun, Roseberry Rocks undoubtedly bears the belle. She combines within her four parallel lines the breezy atmosphere of Salisbury Plain or Newmarket Heath, the varied trinkety, tinselly attractions of Regent Street, the equestrian liveliness of Rotten Row, with a broad expanse of nobly swelling sea. Other places may boast their specialties; Scarborough her pay bridge and newly-built Dovecote, Hastings her castle, St. Leonard's her silence, Weymouth her sands, Dover her castle, Margate her merriment, and Broadstairs her lugubrious solemnity; but the individual attractions of each particular place will be found concentrated at the Rocks, together with the freedom of London and the independence of the country. No sign of trade is visible, no stranded vessel delivering her cargo, no nauseous fish-curer polluting the shore, no noisy boat-builder hammering at his craft—the whole place has a never-ending holiday air, and everything seems to come ready made from afar. From end

to end she is a continuous line of palaces and mansions and beautifully designed buildings. Her population moves gaily and jauntily along, the ladies are all beautiful and elegantly attired, and the men look as if £ *s. d.* were for once banished from their thoughts—a combination of circumstances extremely favourable to authorship.

CHAPTER II.

OUR HEROINE.

Well, this famous Comet year brought to Roseberry Rocks, along with many thousand other visitors who have not been fortunate enough to secure the services of an historian, the young and lovely Miss McDermott, on what the lawyers would call a sort of general issue expedition, ere she took the irrevocable two pound twelve and sixpence worth along with young Jasper Goldspink, the banker's son of the pretty agricultural town of Mayfield in C——shire, with whom she had grown up in a sort of neighbourly intimacy that would most likely have ended in a common matter-of-course match but for the incidents disclosed in the ensuing chapters. Mrs. McDermott, who of course was exceedingly disinterested and unworldly—at the same time not altogether opposed to either rank or wealth—thought she would only be doing Rosa justice by letting her see a little of the world; accordingly, under pretence of getting their pretty mansion of Privett Grove painted, she availed herself of the emancipating influence of railways, and arrived with their first-class clothes in a first-class train at this our first-class watering-place, instead of going to the little fishing town of Herringshoal Sands hard by.

Rosa was then just in the full bloom of womanhood, of medium height, plump and fair, with a calm, somewhat pensive, "Eugénie" expression of countenance that grew upon the beholder. If her perhaps rather prematurely developed form suggested a year or two more to her age than she really deserved, it was amply compensated for by the juvenile looks of Mamma, who, like most fair ladies, had worn wonderfully well. There is nothing so appalling as a great fat mother-in-law.

One of the great drawbacks of locomotion—especially where unprotected females are concerned—undoubtedly is the fleecing the travellers undergo at the hands of the hotel keepers ere they get settled down in a house, and the general evil was aggravated in this particular case by our fair friends—strangers to the place—alighting at Chousey's Hotel, so famous for charges, though "off particular times," be it remembered, as the advertisements say, as reasonable as

any of its class. Unfortunately for its inmates, however, those particular times can never be hit upon, for Chousey seems to make out his bills by the almanac, and it must be an uncommonly queer day to which some particular incident does not attach. Chousey, however, carries things off with such a high hand, such an elegant air, that it is almost a pleasure to be imposed upon by him. Having been a nobleman's valet, he is always obliging enough to assume the possession of titles by his guests, and whenever he condescends to leave his guitar in his wife's boudoir to attend a summons to justify charges, he throws himself into attitude, exhibiting a perfect blaze of jewelry, and, running his beringed hand through his well-waxed ringlets, lisps out with the most perfect composure, "True, my lord," or "True, my lady," as the case may be; "these charges do 'pear rayther high at first glance, but p'raps your lordship (or your ladyship) has forgotten that yesterday was the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, and to-day is the day on which Magna Charta was signed, and of course we are obleged to make a little difference; 'at other times' I believe I may say our charges are as reasonable as can be." Our travellers happened to arrive on the anniversary of the day on which the Malakoff was taken, and staying over that of the fall of Sebastopol were charged half-a-crown a head for bread and butter teas, three-and-sixpence for breakfasts, six shillings for mutton chop dinners, lights and apartments in proportion—all very surprising to housekeepers who know the prime cost of the articles. We need not say that our friends did not stay there any longer than they could help.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. THOMAS TRATTLES.

Mr. Chousey advertising, as well the arrival of his victims, as their departure and where they go to, our fair friends had hardly got themselves shook out in their pretty semi-detached villa in Seaview Place, and John Thomas his calves revised and hair powdered after the toils of unpacking, ere the well-known Mrs. Thomas Trattles came, card-case in hand, to pay her respects to the newly-arrived inmates. Mrs. Trattles knew a lady who knew a gentleman who knew another lady who knew a cousin of the late lamented Mr. McDermott, and upon the strength of their far-fetched introduction, she had called to see if she could be of any use to Mrs. McDermott, help her to a cook —tell her of a grocer, a blanchisseuse, a bather-woman, a butcher, a flyman—anything that was wanted.

Mrs. Trattles lived a good deal upon commission, and was always ready in the mediating way, to arrange introductions, adjust differences, recommend houses, engage musicians, or attend dinner-parties on the shortest notice. She knew everything and everybody, and was considered a great authority in the matter of money. She acquired this reputation, and maintained her ascendancy, by always descending to minutiæ—telling the odd hundreds, instead of dealing in thousands, as most people do. Thus young Wheeler would have four thousand three hundred and twenty pounds a-year, instead of the five thousand that Mrs. Bolsterworth, the opposition matrimonial appraiser, boldly assigned to him; while Mrs. Trattles knew that Captain Caret's great expectations from an uncle were much overrated, the estate of Meadowbank upon which they chiefly dwelt, being close to a particular friend of hers, and barely worth fifteen hundred a-year, out of which there was a payment of eighty-two pounds a-year for keeping up a school, all very imposing information on account of its perspicuity. To say that Mrs. Trattles knew nothing about either case, would not be far from the mark. That, however, is neither here nor there; people like to believe what they wish, and it answered Mrs. Trattles' purpose to accommodate them.

For fanning a flirtation she was truly invaluable, and was frequently retained on both sides. She was now busily engaged in endeavouring to clench a somewhat procrastinated courtship between Captain Languisher of the Coolington Hussars, and pretty Sarah Snowball,

whose face unfortunately was her fortune; as also in trying to induce Mr. de Breezey to reciprocate Miss Nettleworth's devotion, without any apparent progress in either case. Rides and drives, and boats and balls, had all been tried unsuccessfully, and now the fine weather had prompted an excursion to the beautiful ruins of Witchwood Priory.

The thing was about ripe when Mrs. Trattles found our fair friends' names in the list of arrivals, and learning from Mrs. Chousey, with whom she was on easy tea-drinking terms, that they were highly genteel people, and Miss very pretty, she determined to avail herself of the unlimited capability of a Pic-Nic, to enlist them in the service. Having now satisfied herself that they would do, she gradually unfolded her budget of gaiety and amusements, coming at length to the Pic Nic, and dwelling on the enchanting nature of the scenery around Witchwood Priory, with incidental mention of the great people who would be there. Sir Stephen Sappey, the member for Bluffshire's eldest son, with eighteen thousand a-year landed property; Mr. Bolingbroke Benson, with a Peerage in expectancy; Mr. John and Mr. William Worthington, both very nice young men; Mr. Stanley Smith, Mr. Martin Hogg, and many other great catches.

Mrs. McDermott heard all Mrs. Trattles had to say with well-feigned indifference. She was extremely obliged—very much so indeed—but they were not there for gaiety, merely on a bathing excursion while their house was getting painted, and if they were to go, they wouldn't know anybody, and altogether, she was afraid they must decline; at the same time, they were extremely obliged to Mrs. Trattles for thinking of them, very much obliged indeed, and so on. Mrs. Trattles, on the other hand, charged with vigorous determination—"Oh, dear, indeed; but she would take care that they should know everybody, she would introduce them herself." But Mrs. McDermott, not knowing her friend, wisely left the offer open, promising to let Mrs. Trattles know in the evening if they could come. And Mrs. Trattles having presented her card, presently cleared herself out—hoops and all—leaving Mamma and Miss to con the matter over, who shortly after put on their things to go out for a stroll, but in reality, to call at Comfit, the confectioner's, to eat themselves into the information they required. Suffice it to say, that what they heard of Mrs. Trattles was so satisfactory, that they were next seen at that interesting repertory, Madame Bergamotte's bonnet shop, trying on bonnet after bonnet, until all idea of what they intended to have was entirely lost sight of. It ended, however, in two blue boxes and a bill arriving that evening in Seaview Place. Nor was this all; for next day, Monsieur Julian Millefleurs, the famous Parisian hairdresser, who tires for three and sixpence a trip, was summoned along, who immediately on seeing our fair friend's soft blue eyes beaming between two bunches of light-brown ringlets,

denounced those bar-maid looking things, and insisted upon dressing her hair in plain bands, which both Mrs. and Miss afterwards agreed were very becoming. And they wondered what a "certain person" would say if he saw her, said "certain person" being an admirer of ringlets.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAD WE LEFT BEHIND.

The wholesome maxim, that "it is well to be off with the old love before we are on with the new," applying to a certain extent to the fair as well as to the ruder sex, we may here say a few words about our hero No. 1, ere we bring No. 2 upon the *tapis*. Jasper Goldspink, if not a smart youth, had some very excellent attributes. He was the son of a rich banker, and it is remarkable, that though people will abuse most other callings, it is a rare thing to hear any one say a word against a banker, simply, we suppose, because abusing a banker would be symptomatic of having been refused a loan. Jasper therefore was a very great man in the country, and only required the aid of Lady Airyworth, Lady Plumage, or some other great leader of fashion, to make him pass muster in town. It is singular how people worship wealth even though there is no chance of getting any of it themselves. If Jasper hadn't been rich, or on the highway to riches, such an ordinary every-day looking youth would never have attracted attention at all; as it was, people winked and nudged each other as he passed, and said, "Oh that will be a rich man"; or, "Oh, what a sight of money that man will have!" He walked the streets with a strut and a stare, that as good as said, "I'll be a deal richer than you." Old Goldspink was one of the cautious money-scraping order of bankers, as contra-distinguished to the go-a-head Scotch school, who run a-muck at everything. He thought of nothing but money, revolving a thing over in his mind many times before he did it, always in a doubtful point calling in the aid of figures, beginning with his favourite apophthegem of sivin and four being elivin, and so piling up numbers until he arrived at a satisfactory solution of the mystery. Thus, for instance, if he saw Mr. Cordy Brown, the butcher, stealing out of town, with his spurs in his hat, concealing, as he thought, his hunting apparel under his olive-coloured Macintosh, he would immediately begin, "sivin and four's elivin, and eighteen, is twenty-nine—there's that Cordy Brown going out hunting again—and eight is thirty-sivin—much better be taking up Willowedge and Co's overdue bill, than breaking people's hedges scrambling after Jonathan Jobling's harriers—and fourteen is fifty-one—Jonathan will be coming to grief himself

some day, see his name to a great deal of very suspicious paper—and sivin is fifty-eight—take care he don't do me"—with which wise resolution he would dive his hands into the depths of his capacious trowser pockets and begin his sivin-and-four calculations upon somebody else. Not that old Goldspink altogether disapproved of hunting, for at the instigation of his ambitious wife, he had bought our hero No. 1, what he called "a pair of hunting horses," to enable him to follow the chase with his noble but sadly overdrawing customer, the Duke of Tergiversation's foxhounds; but our young friend, after two or three spread-eagleings on his back, became so disgusted with a sharpish switch across the bridge of his nose from the return branch of an ash tree, that he gladly took advantage of a temporary ailment to one of his horse's "back legs," to withdraw from the chase, and at the period of our story, was turning his attention to what he considered the more profitable occupation of the Turf. As we shall presently have him down at Rosebery Rocks Races, we will defer a further description of his person until he comes; it being evident that a man's looks depend very much upon what he puts on, just as a lady is one person in a bonnet, and another in a riding-hat. We will, therefore, now return to the Rocks, and amuse ourselves there as best we can, till Jasper arrives.

CHAPTER V.

WITCHWOOD PRIORY.

Witchwood Priory is well adapted for expeditions of a romantic order, being a spacious ivy-grown ruin, whose crypts, and corridors, and pillars, have been rescued by the present generation from the vandalism of the last, and converted from a damp, deserted, nettle-grown rubbish corner, into a picturesque architectural exhibition, situated in the midst of ground-sweeping trees, interspersed with grottoes, and labyrinths, and every convenience for losing oneself. It is a nice easy distance from the Rocks—say, a cabman's five miles, or a Christian's four, over undulating downs, whose sound elastic turf gives spirits to the rider, and sprightliness to the steed. Nor are the creature comforts of life altogether unknown at the far end, for as soon as

"Smiling spring her earliest visit pays,"

John Baccoman of the "Cat and Compasses" licensed eating-house, in Shell Street, packs up his beverages, while his wife clutches the tea-caddy, and away they go with their portable emigrant's house, which

they pitch beneath the beautiful remains of the large gothic window on the east of the ruin, and momentarily dispel the poetry of the place by the exhibition of baskets, and buns, and labels, announcing bitter beer, cigars, and hot water for tea. Still this eye-sore is somewhat redeemed by the presence of a veritable gipsy—one of the real dark-skinned, black-eyed, black-ringletted race, who goes fluttering about in her red shawl, russet gown, and ankle boots, dispensing titles, and honours, and fortunes, to all who will listen to her. And a rare business she had done during this our Comet year; for if half the titles she had promised were to come true, Sir Bernard Burke might publish a new edition of his Peerage immediately. Though we all profess to laugh at the creatures, it is wonderful how many of us like to have our fortunes told on the sly. Baccoman too had done pretty well in his line, charging a shilling for a glass of ale, ninepence for a cigar, and sixpence for a penny bun; but then, as John says, summer does last such a werry short time with them, and they maun make hay while the sun shines. And though he predicted that each fine day would be the last, and always pointed out indications of the coming storm, still the sun set with undiminished splendour, and rose with unalloyed brightness; and still John's Union Jack ascended the staff on the ivy-grown flag-tower, and still the white kicking pony came lilting and tilting over the downs, with a spring-cart load of comestibles; and still the gipsy's cry, as regarded the visitors, was, "They come! they come! I see them galloping! I see them galloping!" up to the very day on which our particular party assembled.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR PIC-NIC DAY.

T was a lovely day—the bright green sea stretched glassily away in lazy languor, scarce deigning to break silence with a gentle ripple against the shingly shore, while the saucy gulls hovered and dipped, and hovered and dipped, regardless of the pop, pop, popping from the guns of the unsteady handed sportsmen in the boats. Bathing-machines were engaged three or four deep, and the fair occupants got good deep remunerative dips instead of being splashed over with a little salt-water, as they lay on the beach like fish on a fishmonger's slab. The "Victoria and Albert," the "Empress Eugénie," the "Wedding Ring," the "Honeymoon," the "John and Nancy,"—all the gay white-sailed party-coloured boats pushed away from the shore with merry giggling groups who thought they could never be sick with such a smooth sea. Every available vehicle, from the pair of horse fly down to the little goat-chaise, were taken up on the very fullest of full terms. The fineness of the day drew all parties to the door, windows were thrown up, passages left exposed, while the buff-slippered owners, stretched listlessly on the benches, stared at the sea, indulged in vacuity, or polished their nails with a pebble, thinking how sharp they would be when they got back to town. It was a regular dozy, do-nothing sort of day. The new Reform Bill ought to exempt people from labour when the thermometer is at a certain height.

Smiling cantering bevies of beauties, with their shining hair in gold and silver beaded nets, and party-coloured feathers in their jaunty little hats, alone imparted energy to the scene as they tit-tup-ed along with quickly following tramp, led by the most magnificent and affable of riding-masters, who thus advertise their studs, just as

Howes and Cushing advertise their grand United States Circus. Bless us, what a pace some of them go! That gentleman with all the honours looks as if he were leading his fair squadron into action, while Napoleon the First, with his clean white leathers and shining jack-boots and no less interesting miscellany, follows at a pace that is perfectly appalling. If the fair-haired lady on the right of the Emperor were to fall, she would be crushed by the flaunting habits in the rear. But people who ride by the hour must go fast, or else they

think they don't get anything for their money. The Roseberry Rocks hacks, however, are the exception to all other watering-place hacks, for instead of the wretched sunken-eyed, woe-begone bags of bones peculiar to other places, we have well-bred, well-conditioned, well-caparisoned animals, that but for their constant change of riders might pass for the party's own. No Humane Society's "posters" disfigure the walls of the town, cautioning the owners against cruelty to animals, and calling upon the hirers to aid in their protection. Wonderful are the capabilities of the ordinary hack-horses! They can put two days work into one, provided of course that the owner gets paid for two days instead of one; and the poor creatures are never so fresh and "fit to go," according to the owner's account, as when they have just come off a twenty-miles' trot. Parties should be paid for risking their necks on such animals, instead of being charged for their use.

But we are getting into the activity of life instead of pursuing the lassitude of heat. Let us get out into the country, for it is one of the peculiarities of the English always to want to be somewhere else than where they are.

Roseberry Rocks is one of those fine large independent places that even Paul Pry himself would be utterly at fault in appropriating the consumption of pie to this person or to that, of knowing who is going to one place and who to another. As in London on the Derby day, it is only when the extemporised drags begin to move dangerously about the streets, and the silken-jacketed post-boys to coax their jibbing screws up to the doors, that the streets become alive to the gaiety of the Greens or the Browns; so at the Rocks, it is only when the hamper-laden footmen begin to follow looming young ladies, dressed if possible with more than usual care and expansion, to their respective rendezvous, that people begin speculating upon what is going on, and wondering whose party it is. Still there are so many resources and outlets for gaiety at the Rocks, and so many converging roads, that it is not until the town is well cleared, and the concomitant brick-fields and linen-flying drying-grounds passed, that any decided opinion can be formed upon the points of attraction—or, indeed, where all dress so fine, who is going gadding, and who is merely grinding for exercise.

After all is said and done, perhaps there is nothing so potent as a turnpike-gate for settling the contributories to a party, for as nine-tenths of the watering-place people who drive out only do so for the sake of the bump—neither looking to the right nor the left—they may just as well bump two miles twice over on one side of a turnpike-gate as two miles on one side and two on the other; and Checkley-view-bar being most judiciously placed, it required a good deal of whip-cord, accompanied by certain guttural objurgations, to induce a well-accustomed hack to face its devouring jaws; and while the driver of a turn-about vehicle would have nothing to do but give his horse its head on coming to the well-defined semi-circular wheel-marks on the road, the

outward bound Jehu has to get his horse by the head, and jip and jag and flagellate up to the white-aproned janitor who stands at the receipt of custom, giving parsimonious bits of paper in return for well-proportioned halfpence. The money being paid, the trustees of the road then seem to let people down gently, for the theretofore well-kept road gradually becomes rough and rutty, and presently degenerating into a toilsome short sea hill sort of track, which the drivers endeavour to circumvent by diagonal deviations over the sound carpet of the downs. Then it is that the difference between the masters and the men is apparent, the masters getting off to ease their horses up the oft-recurring hills, while the slug of a servant slouches on his seat and plies the whip as he goes. Out upon the great lout who cannot ease a horse, even though it is not his own, say we! All then becomes openness and space. The swelling downs roll along in continuous folds to the grey dim of the horizon, while occasional clumps and belts of trees vary the monotony of the scene, and denote the habitations of the cultivators of the improved patches of land in the valleys. The uplands are dotted with gorse, increasing in strength towards the top, and affording comfortable jumps to such equestrians as prefer the downs to doing the Howes and Cushing of the streets. Bleater the shepherd leaves his tinkling-belled flock to the care of his sensible dog, and stands, crook in hand, by the road side, staring and wondering what can bring so many fine ladies and gentlemen out of the town every day. Carriage after carriage goes creaking past, and canter after canter go the three-and-sixpence an hour-ers; some in flocks, some in pairs, the ladies enlivening the landscape with their fluttering veils and their varied paces, the riders taking occasional peeps at the watches, to see that they are not going too far for their money.

From Prospect Hill a clear programme of our pic-nic party may now be obtained, the foremost carriages which dot the chalky road over the distant down—

"Show scarce so gross as beetles,"

while the whole line backward is studded with enlarging vehicles enlivened with gay parasols, pink, blue, white, lilac, lavender—all the smart colours of the season. And much the fair bearers need them, for the sun is scorchingly hot, and the air, even in these exalted regions, dances before the dazzled eyes. At length the foremost vehicles gain the brow of North Bendlaw Hill, from which the Union Jack of the Priory is seen, and a slight incline of the road quickly varies the landscape and brings the traveller amid the enclosures and green trees of the vale. Carriage after carriage drives quickly down, and great is the run upon Mrs. Baccoman's looking-glass, each fair lady thinking the other is keeping it a most unconscionable time, while the anxious faces of the waiters contrast with the self-satisfied ones of the goers away.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GIPSY'S PROPHECY.

People at a pic-nic seldom amalgamate well until after dinner. There is generally caution and mistrust until confidence is promoted by a few glasses of wine. Thus it was on the present occasion. The guests kept to their respective coteries, seemingly more intent upon asking, "Who was who," than desirous of making "Who's" acquaintance. So, as each looming lady emerged from her shake out, she made up to the matron who had charge of her movements. They then trooped off on their respective trips, some down the lovers'-walk, some up to the haunted glen, others to the dropping well at Dewhurst. Most of them had seen the Priory with its crypt and octagonal pillars, its famous old windows and winding staircase, while the now canvas-roofed refectory was to be the dining-room on the present occasion. Very little sight-seeing serves parties at a pic-nic. Though so light and airy, they are generally beat on the more serious business of life.

Our fair heroine, though she had the graceful feminine art of accommodating her likings to her company, preferred a stroll among the large trees to a squeeze up the narrow stone staircase, or a dive down below; a choice that was highly approved of by Mamma as better both for her daughter's complexion, as for preserving the freshness of her *piquant* little black hat set off with a light blue feather, and the glorious amplitude of her white muslin dress, enriched with ribbons to match the feather. We often think it fortunate for the Hottentot Venus that she lived when she did, for she would never have made anything by showing herself now-a-days. Well, our fair friend and Mamma having evaded Mrs. Trattles as she went to greet some fresh arrivers, proceeded to perambulate together, Mamma relying upon the never-failing attraction of beauty for procuring her daughter partners at the proper time. So they lionised themselves, peeping up this walk and down that, more intent upon killing time than adding to their stock of topographical knowledge. As they sauntered along in the cool shade formed by the over-hanging branches of the limes, a something rustled on the left, and presently the swarthy red-shawled gipsy stood with distended arms before them. Mamma and daughter uttered a faint shriek and started back.

"Nay, don't be frightened!" exclaimed the gipsy, soothingly—

"don't be frightened! Bless your beautiful face, my lovely young lady!" continued she, addressing our heroine. "If ever there was a babe born to rank and riches it is your own sweet iligant self."

"Stuff and nonsense," muttered Mrs. McDermott — "stuff and nonsense," motioning her aside with her blue parasol.

"Nay, don't say that," replied the gipsy, softly—"don't say that, my lady. I've ruled the planets these twenty years, and never yet told wrong; cross my palm with a bit of silver, my dear lady mam, and I'll tell you who you'll marry—step aside here, step aside," continued she, motioning them off the walk.

"No, my good woman," replied Mrs. McDermott, pursuing her course; "we don't believe in any such nonsense; but see, there's a shilling for you," producing one from her purse as she spoke, "and now let us hear what you have to say."

The gipsy pocketed the money, and scrutinised our young friend with her piercing black eyes.

"You've not yet seen the man you'll marry," said she, slowly and deliberately.

"Indeed!" blushed Rosa, thinking of our friend in the country.

"But you'll see him to-day," added the gipsy, archly.

"And what will he be like?" asked Mrs. McDermott.

"Like!" exclaimed the gipsy. "He'll be the handsomest man here—tall, with raven hair, and eagle eyes, and money beyond measure."

"Indeed!" laughed Mrs. McDermott, and just at that moment some more migratory balloons appearing in the distance, the gipsy rushed off to invest them with husbands also—assigning dark to the fair, fair to the dark, tall to the short, and so on. And Miss and Mamma sauntered back to the Priory, inwardly wondering what would come of their own particular prophecy.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADMIRATION JACK.

The usual order of a pic-nic march is, the promoters with their nearly caught conquests first, the half caught couples second, the mere nibblers third, and then, what the racing reporters call the "ruck." The wholly disinterested, disengaged, yawny young gentlemen, never come till late; indeed never exactly know whether they are coming or not until they get there, and when there, are never sure they are going to stay. A pic-nic, being an indefinite sort of entertainment, comprises every variety of male costume—morning coats, evening coats, nondescript coats, riding boots, dress boots, jockey whips, and heel spurs. The ladies only vary their costume by laying aside their bonnets for dinner or the dance, though if they were to take our advice they would keep them on—especially if the bonnets are pretty ones.

There had been a great setting down of company during the time of Mrs. and Miss McDermott's walk, and several equally entire strangers as themselves having come, there was less staring, and less use of the eye-glass than before. What a summary of severity can be expressed in the cynical curl of the nose at the quizzing-glass. Fancy a young fellow who has just married an old woman for her—the reader knows what—undergoing the scornful scrutiny of some fifty or sixty dowagers, as he sneaks with his piece of antiquity up a ball-room. That, however, is the settled severity of a row of wall-flowers which the ever-varying grouping of a pic-nic affords no accommodation for. When our fair friends returned from their walk, the bustle of arrangement was in full operation, and Mrs. Trattles and Mrs. Bolsterworth, Mrs. Heaviman, and Miss Whistlecraft, all the match-making fussing ones, were running about, asking for this gentleman or for that, endeavouring to joint their parties preparatory to dinner. Seeing our fair friends approach, Mrs. Trattles ran to reclaim them—chided their truancy, and in the same breath proposed to introduce a "most particular friend of hers, a young gentleman of large fortune—fifteen thousand four hundred a-year, landed property, with a castle—extremely handsome," and before Mrs. McDermott could edge in a word, a tallish, dark-haired, dark-eyed gentleman—much the sort of the man described by the gipsy—splendidly got up, and generous in jewelry, was bowing respectfully under the name of Mr. Bunting. Having clenched

that introduction, Mrs. Trattles quickly hurried off to suit some other parties in a similar way, leaving Mr. Bunting to ingratiate himself in the usual way—smiling, sidling, ogleing, simpering, nothinging in fact—a stile of proceeding that our newly-introduced friend was quite *au fait* at. Mr. Bunting or Admiration Jack, as he was commonly called, from his extreme satisfaction with himself, though he had the reputation of an immense fortune, had in reality nothing of the sort, having been ruined in rather a singular way—namely, by his grandfather buying a book. We have heard of people being ruined in curious ways—some by getting fortunes left them—others by not getting fortunes left them, some by marrying heiresses, others by not marrying heiresses, some by marrying rich widows, others by not marrying rich widows; but we never before heard of a man being ruined by buying a book. Yet so it was in the present instance. Jack was the grandson of that jolly old nautical Rear-Admiral Bunting, so well known at the various ports where good fellows congregate, and the Rear-Admiral being once stranded at Portsmouth, had had the misfortune to buy a book—the only one, we should think, in the place—namely, "Daftun on Planting," which completely turned the head of the tar. Being a great man for the wooden walls of old England, he was highly delighted with it, not only because it showed how to maintain the supremacy of his favourite service, but also how a pure patriot like himself might enrich his family by benefiting his country. This was by planting oak, and "Daftun" showed as clearly, as figures always show everything, that an immense fortune must inevitably be reaped by the noble national undertaking. Indeed the principles upon which the calculations proceeded were so simple as almost to defy contradiction, and may be briefly stated as founded on the supposition that an oak-tree at seventy-five years of age must contain forty-five feet of timber, which must be worth £8 a-tree. Then, without troubling ourselves with intermediate thinnings which, however, "Daftun" showed would be highly remunerative, there were to be 302 trees per acre, at the end of seventy-five years, which at £8 per tree, would be worth £2416 per acre. Add as many acres together as would satisfy ambition, and there would be the money to the day, far better than buying farms, or investing money in the funds, or in any other species of fluctuating property.

The idea struck the Rear-Admiral amazingly, and he determined to carry it out to the utmost of his ability. Accordingly he bought a bleak hill side in Renfrewshire, five hundred acres of which he magnanimously appropriated to growing timber, and he saw his way to one million three hundred and sixty-five thousand five hundred pounds! as plainly as if he had it in his pocket. "Bliss us, what a fortin!" the old boy used to exclaim, as far away at sea he lay tossing about in his cabin. "Bliss us, what a fortin! one million three 'underd and sixty-five thousand five 'underd punds, all for an

outlay of three-and-twenty 'underd." And he hugged "Daftun" to his heart and blessed him, for showing him the way to such wealth, and he occasionally saw in the dim mist of the future a peerage for the owner of the aerial edifice of Buntingbury Castle. So having planned and planted, and done everything in a most business-like way, upon paper, he sailed upon the world with the confidence of a man who has invested a sum of money in the funds, and given his broker a power of attorney to add the accruing dividends to the capital.

Years rolled on, and the Admiral and the Admiral's son having both paid the debt of nature, now when our hero No. 2 ought to be in possession of unbounded wealth, his resources from his forest may be best described by extracting an item from Messrs. Chalker and Charger of Lothbury's bill, who had been sent down express to look a little into matters, in consequence of a proposal our friend had made the beautiful daughter of a rich client of theirs. The following is the item:—

"Chaise-hire and expenses from C——b to Buntingbury Castle, where instead of a fine forest we found nothing but stunted stag-headed trees, and a four-roomed shooting-box of a house—£2. 3*s*. 4*d*."

Still there *was* the estate, and there *was* the house, and, as the Judges lay it down every assizes, that "a man's house is his castle," surely our friend had a right to call his shooting-box a castle, if he liked. Why, we remember a sheepfold on the Wiltshire Downs that used to be called something Castle. We went there one morning to hunt, expecting to get a good breakfast, and found nothing but an old shepherd stretched upon a grassy mound. "This be castle," said he, in reply to our inquiry, and sure enough, in a few minutes up came Squire Twentystun's fox-hounds and deployed over the place. Out upon the objection, say we! It's not a liberal way of looking at the matter.

Thus, then, stood our friend Mr. Bunting. He was young, gay, and good-looking; with a great taste for beauty, and abundant leisure for falling into love. Indeed, he did little but dress, sigh, and write limping lines; and though he had often had a certain document beginning with "Proposals for a settlement to be made on the intended marriage of John Bunting, Esq., with Miss so and so," returned on his hands, sometimes with a stiffish lawyer's bill, sometimes without: he yet retained the reputation of great castellated wealth, and indeed half believed that the much decried oaks would still come round, and be a goodly heritage at last. "Daftun" said so, and surely "Daftun" knew better than the lawyers. They only wanted a little more age perhaps, and when they once took to growing, would soon make up their lee way. So our friend hoped against hope, keeping "Daftun's" calculations afloat; and though he would have had no objections to an heiress, if it was only to get the wherewithal to build the castle with, yet, he did not go altogether for money, but made beauty his first conside-

ration, and had now run the gauntlet of many fair maids, including a brunette or two, from whose successive negations, he always felt morally certain he could never recover; yet somehow or other, after the lapse of a certain time, he always found himself in just the same predicament with some other young lady. His last flame was pretty Miss Wingfield of somewhere in Cumberland, whose father had let him down somewhat unceremoniously, returning his writings with a lawyer's bill made out in a rather vindictive acrimonious way; for instead of running all the six-and-eightpences, thirteen-and-fourpences, and one pound ones, on in regular succession, carrying the amount of each page over on to the next, Biter and Co., of Whitehaven, added each page up separately, making what they called a "grand recapitulation" of the whole at the end. So when our hero got the plump packet (stamped with a green stamp), and turned with hurried hand and eager eye to the bottom of the last page, he perked up considerably on finding 13*l.* 17*s.* 2*d.*, figuring as the amount, and chucked the whole thing over on to the side-table for future consideration. But a few days after, having stuck fast in a sonnet he was weaving to his various lady-loves, he turned for inspiration to something solid; when half way down an unnumbered page, he discovered the dread reality, and the bill instead of being 13*l.* 17*s.* 2*d.*, was in fact 43*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, the 13*l.* 17*s.* 2*d.*, being only the amount of the last page. So what with a twenty-guinea diamond ring that the young lady had forgotten to return him along with his letters and poetical effusions, together with seven pound odd he had spent in equestrian exercise, in the Howes and Cushing line, he had got a long way into a three-figure note. Admiration Jack, however, was a man of good cheer, not easily depressed, on capital terms with himself, and just as ready to enter the lists as if he had never been foiled; and no sooner saw our fair friend circling among the crowd, than declaring that there were as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, he resolved to make up to her. And Rosa having recovered from the surprise and trepidation caused by the speedy fulfilment of the prophecy (which making allowance for the exaggeration of a gipsy, was not such a bad one), turned a smiling face and ready ear to our philanderer, as if there was no such person as Jasper Goldspink, "sivin and four," or other friends and relations in the world. So, when the preparatory clatter of knives and forks became louder, and the tramp and hurry of footmen more frequent, the two stood chatting and simpering together, suggestive of the "handsomest couple under the sun." Mamma looked approvingly on, Mrs. Trattles congratulated herself on the success of her venture, while Mrs. Tartarman, with her saucy-nosed daughters, stood with well thrown back heads pitying the poor girl who was going to be made a fool of. Presently there was a mysterious movement in the throng, arms suddenly distended either singly or in pairs, a faded green baize curtain was drawn aside, and the company gradually

proceeded from the sky canopied drawing-room of the outer ruin, to the canvas-covered refectory adjoining. Great was the gathering of crinoline, and squeezing past corners, and getting round tables, and beggings of pardons, and askings to be unloosed, and thanks for the favours, and wonderings of the ladies how they were ever to get themselves seated on such little narrow benches. Better far to have had a spread on the ground with unlimited circumference for each. However, there they were, and with no more space assigned than when ladies were half their present size. At length all get wedged in somehow or other; and amidst serious reflections as to how they would look when they came out again, the Rev. Mr. Truelove said a short grace, and the business of dinner began.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PIC-NIC.

We hold that a pic-nic is not a pic-nic where there are well-arranged tables and powdered footmen to wait. It is merely an uncomfortable out-of-door dinner. A pic-nic should entail a little of the trouble and enterprise of life, gathering sticks, lighting the fire, boiling the pot, buying or stealing the potatoes. It is an excellent training for housekeeping, and affords a favourable opportunity for developing the skill of young ladies, in an art, that as servants go, they all seem likely to have to come to sooner or later, namely, waiting on themselves. Moreover, what one cooks oneself is always much better than what anybody else cooks for one, just as the money that a man makes is always a great deal more prized than what comes jingling in of itself.

Our party on this occasion was of the well-supplied order—plenty of everything, and plenty of servants to hand things about. Some brought their butlers, because the butlers chose to come; some brought their footmen to show their new liveries; some their pages to keep them out of mischief. And though there were a few of the usual casualties of moving, such as the salt coalescing with the sugar, and the pickles bursting into the pie, the servants had the rectification of matters, and there was no scrambling for plates, no begging for forks, no two people eating with one spoon. All was orderly and orthodox, plenty of provisions with the usual preponderance of hams, tongues, and chickens. None of the ladies having lunched, no, not even had a bun, there was a very sensible difference between their performances on this occasion, and when they come in their gorgeous attire at half-past seven for eight o'clock in the evening, to criticise each other's dresses, and interrupt the hungry men in the middle of their mouthfuls. So they competed very fairly with the ruder sex in their performances. Presently a battue of corks proceeded from the curtained corner where the warm water jug for the knives was concealed from public view, and at the glad sound all sorts of glasses were enlisted, from the satisfactory open bell-shaped ones, down to the little narrow froth-catchers, out of which a man gets a taste of the grateful beverage at the bottom. A second salute, if possible more vehement than the first, then set people quite at their ease, and made the shy young gentlemen turn confidently to their partners,

instead of looking sheepish, and wondering who was watching them. Captain Languisher looked sweet on Miss Snowball, and Miss Nettleworth hung on Mr. de Breezey's every word. Our friend, Mr. Bunting, having soon satisfied the requirements of an unripe appetite, proceeded to study the profile of our fair friend, under the favourable auspices of the saucy little hat, so different to the coal-skuttle bonnets of former days, that required a telescope to see to the far end of them. Very fair and beautiful he found her. A high smooth ivory forehead, arched with beautiful light hair, calm pensive blue eyes, with long lashes and regular brows, a straight well formed nose, with playing dimples hovering round an exquisitely formed mouth, full of regular pearly teeth. The slightest possible flush now suffused her naturally pale face, and gave brightness and animation to the whole. Mr. Bunting looked and looked, till at length

"Beauty's pensive eye
Ask'd from his heart the homage of a sigh."

And he most handsomely accorded beauty's request. "She's very pretty" quoth he to himself, as he quaffed off the remains of his third glass of champagne, and held it out for another supply, "very pretty indeed; prettier than Laura Blanc, prettier than Charlotte Hawthorn, and quite as pretty as Lavinia Barnett; and he felt as if he didn't care for all his crosses and misfortunes, or for the recapitulation of Biter and Co's. bill. And now seeing Mrs. Harriman's piercing little grey eyes fixed intently upon him from the opposite side of the table, he immediately asked her to take a glass of champagne in the hopes of drowning what he knew she could tell, an example that was speedily followed by some one else, who perhaps had similar qualms of conscience, thus drawing off her attention, and enabling Mr. Bunting to resume his "sotto voce" conversation undisturbed.

Amid the interchange of sweets, jellies, and simpers, he proceeded on a sort of Dr. Livingstone-like exploration of our fair friend's forthcomings, belongings, and intended stayings; a wide and fertile field of research that lasted through all the iced champagne, and saw the company well into the warmer supply.

Mamma meanwhile sat complacently by, occasionally helping her daughter out where her information was defective, and wondering what Mrs. Goldspink would say if she could see her smart beau—a gentleman with a splendid castle, and sixteen thousand a-year. "Pro—o—digious!" as Dominie Samson would say. No such catches in the country. At length the last lingering plate tapper ceased nibbling, the chopped cheese followed the remains of the more substantial viands, and grace being again said, there was a great inundation of pines, melons, grapes, peaches, all the more costly and luxurious produce, for it was a great fruit year, and though it was dear enough to buy, yet the fruiterers gave little or nothing for it, a shilling a dozen for

peaches; the same for nectarines, a shilling a pound for grapes, and so on, that it was hardly worth the trouble of packing and sending to them. So those who had gardens could afford to be generous at very small cost. The table was abundantly supplied; the producers and the consumers being speedily distinguished by the abstemiousness of the one, and the vigorous enjoyment of the other. The pines were sliced, the melons divided, the pyramids of grapes reduced amidst hearty mirth, and the languid circulation of the long-necked light claret bottles, varied by an occasional wasp hunt, until the "twang, twang, twang," of the fiddle tuners outside reminded them that the jumping enjoyment of the evening had yet to commence. At a look then from Mrs. Campbell de Jenkins at Mrs. Ambrose Brown cannon'd off upon Mrs. Bolsterworth, the crinoline bearers rose, and with much ingenuity of steerswomanship, and many apologies, succeeded in effecting a retreat.

CHAPTER X.

THE DANCE.

The withdrawal of the voluminous ladies made great voids in the hitherto well-crowded table, and the gentlemen had now to commence the process of amalgamation among themselves amid the remnants of fruit and the remains of the wine. But the air was hot and oppressive—the superfluous awning kept the fumes of dinner down, and there seemed to be a general opinion that it would be better to pollute the fresh air outside with cigars than undergo any more of the impure atmosphere within. Accordingly there was soon a general fishing up of hats, a diving for cigars, and a running to Baccoman's by those who had forgotten to bring their cases. Young gentlemen must smoke now-a-days, whether they like it or not. Presently the puffers were seen straggling away in all directions, and, considering that they carried the scent and not the ladies, it was wonderful with what accuracy they found them out, some down in the crypt, some up the ivy-tower, some along at Barndale burn, others listening to the gipsy under the wide-spreading Hartland oak.

The extreme heat of the day was now over, the country people were returning from their work, and Dobbin, and Smiler, and Farmer, and Jessey stood deep in the pond, imbibing the pure stream from its source. Groups of satchel-slung children came loitering along, forgetful of their bows and their drops at the sight of so many fine ladies of such unwonted rotundity. Very odd, they thought, their thin shoes and silk stockings looked compared to their own stout worsteds and clogs. The country was now in the full meridian of beauty.

The hill-sheltered trees were loaded with leaf, whose rich and varied green contrasted with the golden-headed corn, full ready for the sickle, interspersed here and there with the picturesque but rather unpopular poppy. A farmer prefers a good downy thistle to one of these scarlet landscape lighters. One, they say, shows strength, the other poverty.

But it is time to return from our rural ramble, and already the chaperones whose charges have not got eligibly mated, are beginning to fidget and look about, wondering where Mrs. Thomas Trattles, or Mrs. Brown, or Mrs. Campbell de Jenkins can be, while those whose young ladies are better suited saunter unconcernedly along, apparently without, but in reality just within ear-shot, gazing complacently this way or that, admiring the lovely scenery, looking for Tenbury Hills, or trying to make out Springwell Park, or Staunton spire in the distance. Of all the varied accomplishments of life, there are few more useful than that of being conveniently blind and not hearing everything. It saves many a quarrel and much cash.

Our friend Mr. Bunting, who knows the locality well,—indeed it was down the glen, in the violet banks that he managed to slip the twenty guinea diamond ring so adroitly on to the fair, or rather unfair, Miss Wingfield's taper finger,—our friend, we say, manœuvres Rosa and Mamma by a series of tree-screening walks out of sight as well of the curious as of the more mar-plot ladies, from whom he expected no favour; and after a most delightful chat—far surpassing in interest anything she had ever had with our friend in the country—Mr. Bunting wheeled round on the east of the Priory and brought them back in the rear of the capacious Miss Foldingleys, who were too busy turning attentive deaf ears to the gipsy to heed who was coming behind them. So the trio sauntered listlessly into the again-forming group, looking about as unconcernedly as if they had never been away.

The scene had now changed. After a vigorous onslaught upon the remains of the feast, as well by the Baccomans as the servants, the heat-condensing cover had been removed, and the beautiful refectory stood forth in its noble proportions, the rich clustering ivy folding gracefully over the walls, or creeping fantastically up the pillars and about the finely-carved gothic work of the windows. The rough deal table had been removed to one side, and coveys of white cups, clustering about brown hens of tea-pots, denoted that Mrs. Baccoman's privilege of finding hot-water was about to commence. The composite floor had been cleanly swept and sprinkled with water, and half-a-dozen seedy musicians sat patiently in a corner ready to enliven the scene when required. After successive pop visits by the fair ladies to Mrs. Baccoman's looking-glass, there was a general drawing on of clean white, primrose, or lavender-coloured kid-gloves, and then a taking up of positions, with the comfortable confidence of all being right. So at the proper time, the ladies pointed their taper toes and started off gaily with the first quadrille of the evening. Great was

the wheeling, and circling, and spreading, and guiding of crinoline, and divers the apologies of the fair obstructionists for stopping each other's ways. But with a little patience and mutual concession, each fair lady at length got through her portion of the figure. Better have been stopped altogether than not have carried her full complement of crinoline. Wonderful fashion! We suppose we shall have the other extreme next, and dresses as scant as they are now inflatedly full.

At the sound of music the outsiders came trooping in, and then the formidable *corps des observations* of chaperones and dowagers was formed, each intent on watching the glances and movements of some particular party. Our friend Mr. Bunting, who felt his lacerated heart greatly relieved by the soft embrocation of Miss McDermott's smiles, devoted himself heart and soul to his partner, little thinking how Mrs. Bolsterworth was watching him through her double eye-glasses at a convenient aperture between Mr. Malcolm Midwinter and Miss Spinner, who stood before her.

"Just the way he went on with Miss Hawthorn," thought she, rubbing her glasses on the corner of Miss Spinner's light blue scarf; "just the way he went on with Miss Hawthorn;" and Mrs. Bolsterworth felt how her "duty" would compel her to caution Mrs. McDermott against his insidious advances. Duty is a capital cloak for officiousness.

Miss Rosa, who dearly loved dancing, was equally pleased with her partner, and not a little flattered when, at the close of the quadrille, he claimed her for the succeeding valse, and then spun her about in a style very different to the cartwheel evolutions of the young gentlemen she had been accustomed to dance with in the town-hall of Mayfield.

Admiration Jack was a capital performer, and there are few things more prizeable in society than a willing, working, good looking, good dancer. They are the parties who keep the balls alive, and shame the listless young gentlemen lolling against doors, looking as if they had smoked all their energies away. And though the sour grapes chaperones might abuse our active friend Mr. Bunting, and say he was nothing but a flirt, or a man-coquette, there wasn't one of them but what would have been well pleased to have seen him wheeling one of their fair charges about. But Mr. Bunting, if a lawyer-unsatisfying suitor, was, nevertheless, a constant swain, and stuck to his newly-acquired flame with marked perseverance, only introducing her to particular friends—generally young gentlemen in love like himself—always having her for a *vis-à-vis* in the quadrilles, and watching her well in the valses. And the more he looked at her, the more he admired her, and he inwardly resolved to send Mrs. Trattles two dozen of Nectar and Foamer's best sparkling champagne for the introduction.

So the gay ball progressed amid occasional coolings and cups of tea, and peeps at the looking-glass; and the sun having again set with

undiminished splendour, the shades of a long delayed summer's evening at length began to draw on, causing the discontented ones to feel chilly and talk about cloaks, and ask about carriages, while the well-suited ones danced, if possible, with greater vigour than before. The seedy musicians seemed inspired with fresh spirit, and worked away at their instruments to the surprise of the bats and the inconvenience of the ivy-nestling sparrows, now kept out of their berths by

the noise. At length, at the close of an apparently interminable Violente valse, when the most patient and accommodating of the chaperones were hinting the necessity of bringing the delightful day to a close, a cry of "the Comet! the Comet!" drew all parties to the door with a rush, and interrupted the progressing arrangements by mixing all parties up in inextricable confusion. There was no saying

where to find anybody. The cares and watchings and guardings of the day seemed likely to be lost in a moment. As fast as Mrs. Motley rescued Susan Ann from Captain Englehcart, she lost Sarah Jane, while Mrs. Sterne was deserted by her flock altogether. Then there was such star-gazing, such science, such talking of Dr. Donati—the parabolic elements, and the inclination of the planes, in the midst of which the poor seedy musicians struck up "God save the Queen," and then hurried away with their instruments for fear of being impressed into further service. So ended the gay out-of-door party. Carriage after carriage then took up their departing company, and the refreshed horses went cheerfully away in the cool of the evening, with their heads towards home, bringing the glowworm like lamps of the distance into full reality ere many of the travellers had recounted half their adventures, or repeated half the compliments that had been paid them.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. BOLSTERWORTH'S SPOON.

A PIC-NIC is one of those good, useful, indefinite sort of entertainments that may be turned to account in a variety of ways. It can either be made the foundation of future friendships, or the basis for further negotiation, or resolve itself into a bow and a drop altogether. To the pushing and enterprising there is no saying what opportunities they afterwards afford in the way of settling for flys, restoring found property, or inquiring for lost—or never lost—articles. There are people who, if they make up their minds to be into your house, there is no keeping out. Our friend Mrs. Bolsterworth was one of these. She had an obstinate, dogged perseverance that knew no rebuff, and brought her back to the charge as easy and unconcerned as if she had been before received with open arms. She was a sort of cast-iron countenanced woman, that there is no such thing as abashing. She always had a sort of running account variance with Mrs. Thomas Trattles, not only as an opposition caterer, match-maker, and general provider, but because she suspected Mrs. Trattles had interfered in a very promising flirtation between Captain Ganderton, of the Goose-green Fencibles, and Miss Marwood, out of which Mrs. Bolsterworth thought she saw her way to something very handsome—a silver tea-service, perhaps an urn, or a massive centrepiece. Moreover, our somewhat independent friend, Mr. Bunting, had not been so judiciously courteous to her as the too tardy growth of his oak-trees rendered prudent; so that altogether, what with Mrs. Trattles' and his own offences, Mrs. Bolsterworth felt that she owed him "one."

Accordingly, having thought the thing well over in her mind during the morning after our pic-nic, when the card-shedding time of day arrived, she got her best blue moire-antique amplified over her hoops and repellent crinoline, and, new bonnet on head, passed herself before the cheval glass as fit company for any one. The question then was, who she should go to first, and what excuse she should make for going to anybody.

Now Mrs. Bolsterworth had a venerable old spoon—a tablespoon—that looked as if it might belong to half the world, for the initials were almost obliterated, and it was difficult to say whether the indistinct crest was a griffin, an eagle, an owl, or a unicorn. However, it made no matter what it was, because its indistinctness was its merit; and this old spoon Mrs. Bolsterworth proposed making the *open sesame* of people's houses. To this end, having wrapped it carefully up in silver tissue paper, she went forth on her travels, with the pertinent inquiry, "Do you know anybody who lost a spoon yesterday?" on her tongue's-end, instead of the usual hackneyed observations about the charms of the party, the beauty of the weather, or the calmness of the sea. So she meandered along Cockleshell Terrace, Crabfish Court, all round Hallibut Square, and past Floater's Baths into Neptune Place, where the great guns of the world began to congregate. Our yesterday's friend, Mrs. Tartarman, lived here—No. 18—who, estimated by her worldly enjoyments, ought to be extremely happy, for she had both a barouche and a chariot, with other appurtenances. With her Mrs. Bolsterworth had long wished to establish a footing, as well on account of what she had, as because she suspected Mrs. Tartarman, like herself, had a grievance against Mrs. Trattles. So, on coming to Mrs. Tartarman's door, she determined to try the effect of her spoon. A gentle turn of the ivory-knobbed visitor's bell instantly disclosed not only a very superior-looking footman in green and gold, but a bulky butler in the background, who, newspaper in hand, advanced a few paces, with an imperious "not at 'ome" for the footman to pass on to the ignoble pedestrian inquirer at the door.

"Not at 'ome, mem," bowed Black Plush, with the deferential tone of a man aspiring to the woolsack of butlership, and not knowing who may promote his object.

"O, not at home, isn't she," replied Mrs. Bolsterworth, opening her tortoiseshell card-case, as if she was just going to do the usual and pass on. "Not at home," repeated she, half presenting a glazed card to the footman; "yet stay," continued she, withdrawing it from his proffered hand, "do you think Mrs. Tartarman or any of the young ladies lost anything at the pic-nic yesterday?"

"Don't know, I'm sure, mem," replied the footman.

"Do *you* know, Mr. Tapp?" addressing the butler.

"Can't say, I'm sure," replied Mr. Tapp, advancing a little further, thinking there might be something in it. "Can't say, I'm sure,

mem," repeated he; "but if you'll 'blege me with your card, mem, I'll step up-stairs and inquire."

Mrs. Bolsterworth then presented him with the card; and while Mr. Tapp retired, conning it as he went, Mrs. Bolsterworth came into the passage, and took a seat on a double-crested mahogany entrance hall-chair, to wait his return—inwardly speculating upon whether she would get any further or not, depending, she thought, upon how far the ladies had advanced in their company toilettes.

The science of calling has certainly got into very convenient compass of late, and little now remains to be done save to make a transmission of visiting cards by post a legal tender. As it is, nobody ever expects to get into a house; and half the air of the thing is lost by the substitution of visitors' bells for the hearty poundings the gigantic footmen used to give the knockers. By Jove, but some of them knocked as if there were no such things as nerves or headaches in the world. If it was not for the drive, the whole calling custom would collapse, and yet people would perhaps remain quite as good friends as before. It's the beef and mutton that does the business—not the pasteboard. People all know where their friends live without being continually reminded by their calls.

Now, though Mrs. Tartarman was by no means in her at-home attire, having only one of those loosely flowing robes on that look so cool and comfortable as they stand variously ticketed at from eighteen shillings to twenty-five on the figure-stands at the puffing tradesmen's doors, yet the sight of Mrs. Bolsterworth's card, coupled with the inquiry about lost goods, made her send her *deshabille* daughters off to see if they had got all their trinkets, while she desired Mr. Tapp to show Mrs. Bolsterworth up, thinking to take soundings of her while the girls were adorning. Accordingly the rustle of the staircase-ascending petticoats of the young ladies had scarcely subsided, ere the rotundity of clothes, of which Mrs. Bolsterworth formed the nucleus, was looming up into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Tartarman, though very great in a general way, could condescend when it suited her; and this being one of her unbending days, she rose from her ottoman throne as Mrs. Bolsterworth advanced, and tendering her the two fore-fingers of her gloved hand, motioned her to be seated in an easy chair hard by.

"Oh," Mrs. Bolsterworth "wouldn't intrude for one moment, indeed she wouldn't—she had merely called at the door in passing, to ask if—"

But Mrs. Tartarman would have her down before she would let her go any further.

Mrs. Bolsterworth having then accomplished the apparent impossibility of getting into the easy—or to her uneasy—chair, gave her hoops an outward sweep, and, clearing her voice, again commenced her story. "She had just called in passing to ask if Mrs. Tartarman

had got all her things right from their expedition yesterday, for in counting her spoons, she (Mrs. Bolsterworth) had found one that did not belong to her, and she thought perhaps it was Mrs. Tartarman's." Mrs. Bolsterworth unfolding the piece of antiquity as she spoke.

"Oh," Mrs. Tartarman "was so much obliged—she couldn't say how much obliged she was; but it wouldn't be hers, because she hadn't taken any spoons—only forks—Mrs. Maloney having agreed to take spoons for two, on condition of Mrs. Tartarman taking forks;" and then Mrs. Tartarman took the proffered article, and after looking at it attentively, said "she thought it wouldn't be Mrs. Maloney's either, for their crest was a greyhound, and this was a bird or a harp, or she didn't know what. Mrs. Bolsterworth knew Mrs. Maloney she thought," and Mrs. Bolsterworth said she did; but knowing there was nothing to be got out of her, she received back her spoon without proposing to proffer it to her.

While this was going on, the three young ladies, Miss, Milicent, and Matilda Mary, having searched their jewel trays, that is to say, exchanged their limp dresses for well-distended muslin ones, came sailing in one after another, and having made their obeisance to the intrepid caller, aided in directing the conversation to their yesterday's adventures. Having been very unsuccessful in getting partners, and those they did get not being at all to their liking, of course they had not much to say in its favour, and were well disposed to run those young ladies down who had been more lucky in the great dancing lottery of life.

First and foremost among the offenders was our fair friend Miss Rosa, who was pronounced to be a self-sufficient little flirt, and anything but pretty. Mrs. Bolsterworth, seeing which way the wind blew, pursed up her hard-featured mouth, and with divers significant nods and gestures gave them to understand that Miss Mc-what's-her-name had better mind what she was about with that Mr. Bunting, who Mrs. Bolsterworth happened to know something of; whereupon, with very little pressing, she proceeded, in "strict confidence" of course, to reduce our friend from his castellated dimensions to his cottage proportions, making a very different hero of him to what he had before appeared.

"What a thing!" "Only think!" "Well, I *never!*" were the ejaculations freely emitted by the up-turned eyed mother and daughters.

"Why, that's the man that Mrs. Trattles makes such a talk about," observed Mrs. Tartarman, after a pause.

"To be sure it is," assented Mrs. Bolsterworth; "but if you knew Mrs. Trattles as well as I do, you would not place much reliance upon what she says."

"What, she's not one to speak after, isn't she?" asked Mrs. Tartarman.

"Anything but that," replied the oppositionist, with upraised eyebrows and a significant smile.

A short pause then ensued.

"How anybody can call that man handsome, I can't imagine," observed Miss Tartarman, breaking silence.

"Pooh, nobody calls him handsome," sneered Miss Milicent.

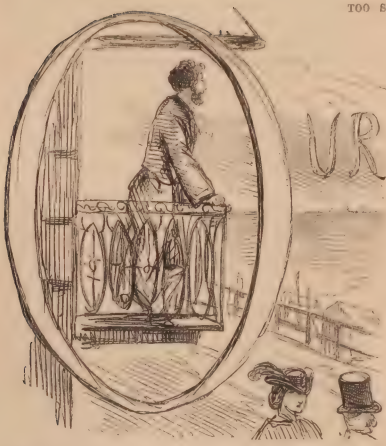
"Dressy, conceited man," observed Mamma, "never see him dressed twice alike."

Whereupon a good wholesome round of abuse was raised against our friend that would not have made him at all proud to hear; and after a protracted sitting, that greatly astonished Mr. Tapp, Mrs. Bolsterworth at length arose and took leave amid a host of fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind shakes of the hands and adieus.

She then circled off to work her spoon somewhere else.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. BUNTING IN BED.



TOO susceptible hero, Mr. Bunting, awoke the next morning in his elegant sea-commanding lodgings—we beg pardon, apartments—in Calliope Crescent, full of intense ardour, and the most devoted admiration. Desperately smitten, as he had often been; he thought he never — no never—had had his too diligent eyes drawn into such bondage before. So perfect and so peerless, fair Rosa seemed created of every creature best; and the more Mr. Bunting thought of her, the more he was enamoured, and the stronger his poetical effusions came gushing to his assistance. He paraphrased the poet—

> "With thee conversing I forget all time,
> All seasons and their change; all please alike;
> Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
> With charm of earliest birds, pleasant the sun,"

and so on, through a good serviceable quotation that we are sorry we have not room for here, until Christian Bonville, his Swiss valet, fearing

his master might run his own breakfast-hour, and his faithful servant's dinner one together, came in with a can of hot water to announce that it was mid-day. Our friend, we may observe, though not possessing the magnificent wealth for which Mrs. Trattles gave him credit, had nevertheless all the comforts and elegancies of single life, including a neat groom, and a couple of saddle-horses, standing at the Pegasus livery and bait stables, in the Hippona Road. So, though we opened that he was ruined by his grandfather's buying a book, the reader will have the goodness to take that expression figuratively, and consider it merely meant that he hadn't as much money as he might—had all things gone straight (or rather, had his Oaks gone straight), a condition of things peculiar to most people.

Mr. Bunting being thus disturbed by the entrance of Bonville, banished his poetical effusions, as he threw aside the muslin-curtain of his canopied French bed, and bounded on to the floor, a hero or not in the eyes of his valet, accordingly perhaps as he paid him. The long and elaborate process of ablution, and of brushing, and combing, and curling, and waxing a dandy into his first or chrysalis state of existence, being at length got through, Mr. Bunting appeared in the pea-green balcony of his sitting-room-window, in Nankin peg-tops, an elegant cerulean blue Turkish silk dressing-gown, with massive red tassels, and lily-of-the-valley worked slippers. He then stood slightly bent forward, leaning with either hand resting on the rich fantastic-patterned railing as if he were going to address a constituency for or against the Reform Bill, but in reality scanning the gay passers-by below. Very light and lively they all looked. The wide-extended flags scarce sufficed for the voluminous muslins that came circling along with a rotundity of sail fit only for a pantomime. Then where two sets of moving balloons met, there had to be a divergence on to the road, to the risk of some one being ridden over by the Howe's and Cushing-ites, who came trooping along at best pace, with every variety of feather fluttering in their hats. Up-and-down, up-and-down they went, the same to-day as yesterday—the same as it will be again to-morrow—perpetual motion hacks! And as Mr. Bunting stood basking in the warm sun, looking at the beauties, appropriating the steeds to their respective stables, and wondering why ladies did not amplify themselves on horseback as well as on foot, and thinking of "Punch's" admirable picture of Mr. Spratt putting, or another not putting Mrs. Spratt up, a sudden something struck his eye—a sort of foreboding of mischief, and a fuller look revealed Mrs. Bolsterworth sailing along with her spoon, and an expression of countenance that as good as said, "I am thy evil genius, John!" Whereupon, in hopes that he hadn't been seen, he backed out of the balcony into his room and rang the bell for his breakfast.

That appetiteless meal at length over, and the "Post" discussed, for the "Times" was too strong feeding for our friend, the aid of Bon-

ville was again enlisted, and with much thought, and after many changes, and much rummaging in the overflowing wardrobes and drawers, a get-up was at last accomplished that Mr. Bunting thought would be very telling. Full of—

"With thee conversing I forget all time,"

he then turned out of doors, endeavouring to conceal his anxiety and eager watchfulness by pretended listless careless indifference. But as he stopped and chatted, and seemed ready to go anywhere with anybody, he kept a watchful eye to the west, his heart beating and his pulse throbbing at each appearing petticoat. And though many came and many met and many passed, still the one magic circle was wanting, and Mr. Bunting at length returned disheartened and dispirited to his home. Why he had his stroll for nothing will appear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. McDERMOTT.

MRS. McDERMOTT had now the pleasing prospect of seeing her daughter with two strings to her bow, a position that is much more appreciated by the ladies than by the gentlemen. We question whether any man ever got a wife who hadn't had some other excellent offer, or who hadn't neglected some other excellent prospect, or who hadn't been very much admired. Mrs. McDermott, when she thought matters over—how Mr. Bunting had made up to Rosa, how indefatigably he had danced with her, how enraptured he seemed, coupled with the not altogether uninteresting fact that he had a large fortune, and that too in possession—felt extremely well satisfied with her day's adventures, and glad that their house, Privett Grove wanted painting. Not that she thought of giving young "sivin and four" his *congé*, but a little competition is an agreeable thing, and flattering. The ladies call it admiration—but the admiration generally ends one way, namely, by the best man being accepted. Of course in saying "best" we are now speaking commercially, not morally. Then as there is an old adage "that an egg to-day is worth a hen to-morrow," the fact of a man being in possession—not subject to the whims and caprices of the friends or relations of this world—is a very important consideration, and one that always has its due weight. It's an awkward thing when a youth has to please a whole regiment of his own relations with a wife, equally awkward

when an unfortunate has to run the gauntlet of a too severely critical set of wife's connections. All things considered it is a wonder how people ever get scrambled through, to say nothing of the friendly attentions of the lawyers, each bent on doing what they call "the best" for their clients—that is, making a case of Jew *versus* Jew of a match.

Mrs. McDermott thought all these points over, and came to the very sensible conclusion, that there was no harm in Rosa seeing a little of the world before she finally settled for life. Still she was a prudent Mamma, and not at all disposed to press matters on hastily, and as Rosa seemed a little paler than usual after her unwonted exercise, she resolved to keep her quietly at home the day after the pic-nic, instead of following up her advantage on the flags, as many over-anxious ladies would have done.

We often wonder that young girls on their preferment, should be so fond of showing themselves, when they are not quite up to the mark. We always think they had much better forego the momentary gratification of the dance, or the interview, rather than risk the consequences of making an unfavourable impression. If we might without offence institute a comparison between the fairest of bipeds and the noblest of quadrupeds, we would observe that no man who knows what he is about will ever show a horse that he wants to sell after a hard day's hunting, or even hacking on the road. He will say, when a customer comes, that the horse is not fit to show, and into the stable he will not let him pass, lest his first look should satisfy or dissatisfy him altogether. So it is with the fair. It is impossible for young ladies to dance and twirl, and talk vehemently all night in the heated atmosphere of a ball-room, and appear next day with the bloom of youth, and the healthy glow of freshness peculiar only to pure air, gentle exercise, and early hours. Yet show they will, pale, haggard, and weary though they be; nay, declare they are not in the least fatigued, and quite ready to go to another ball that evening, if they can get. But nature, inexorable nature, will have her own way, and just as we see scarlet-coated young gentlemen ride twenty miles to cover, hunt, return, dance all night, and smoke till it is time to hunt again, declaring as they dismount the second time, that they never felt so fresh and corkey in their lives, yet drop asleep directly after dinner; so the weary listlessness of over-exertion will prevail even in the gayest and the liveliest throng, and time's relentless graver begins to draw those lines that so soon separate the ageing from the young—

> "Soon fades the rose, once past the fragrant hour,
> The loit'rer finds a bramble for a flower;"

as our poetical friend, Mr. Bunting, would say. Mrs. McDermott did not risk this sort of thing. She saw that Rosa was not herself, and instead

of letting other people see the same, she kept her quietly in the cool of the back drawing-room until the heat of the day was over, when she took her by the retired route of Rosemary Gardens, Park Place, and Victoria Villas, up on to the breezy downs, at the back of the sea-stretching town. Here, amid groups of nursery-maids and children, flannel-clad cricketers, and small young gentlemen wheeling about in charge of large drill-sergeants, they sat and sauntered about until it was time to return to tea.

Meanwhile Mr. Bunting, as we have shown, polished the flags of Promenade Gardens, Belvidere Terrace, Parnassus Place, all the likely draws where people most do congregate, without a find. Dull and dispirited he at length withdrew to his dinner, hoping for better luck on the morrow, and inwardly upbraiding himself for not having gone boldly to call.

CHAPTER XIV.

ROSEBERRY ROCKS' REGATTA.

People who call Regattas dull and stupid—say they never can make either head or tail of them, see which boat is first, or which is last, or understand what the bang, bang, banging of the guns is for—take a superficial view of the matter, and know little of their merits, in a matrimonial point of view. In fact, they would seem to be invented for the promotion of this particular enterprise, and afford facilities peculiarly their own. In the first place, they draw all people into line, so that pink parasol is easily seen; in the second place, the spectators are stationary, and a well-selected position is generally free from observation, save of those in the immediate neighbourhood; in the third place, regattas are good eyes-right, straight-forward looking exhibitions that afford no excuse for inquisitive prying and peeping about. All minds ought to be engaged and absorbed in the boats out at sea. Contrast these advantages with those afforded by pic-nics, archery meetings, or flower-shows, and the balance of quietude will be found to be greatly in favour of regattas. A pic-nic we have seen, and at flower-shows and archery meetings there are constant crossings, and, what huntsmen call, "throwings in at head," which disturb the comfort and composure of the scene. These are like the interruptions of a boy to a bird building its nest, which sometimes causes it to desert altogether. Young gentlemen especially are liable to get laughed out of their loves.

The day but one following our pic-nic was appointed for the second of these nautical exhibitions of the season, and accordingly the morning was ushered in with whole ladders of colours flying from poles, and every conceivable place, looking as if there had been a general contribution of all the pocket-handkerchiefs in the town. All the gay white-sailed stomach-pumps of pleasure-boats—or purgatory-boats, as they too often are—were decked out in their streamers and flags, and holiday symbols. Then lusty amphibious landsmen went rolling and hitching about, persecuting people to buy their programmes of the coming sport, as if anybody was ever the wiser from having one. Towards noon, the starting and winning-posts were denoted by Union Jacks placed upon buoys, and about the same time, sundry dirty urchins began pushing and paddling about in tubs, preparatory to taking part in the sport on an element that they seemed to have very

little general acquaintance with. Luncheon, that lady's meal of the day, being at length over—the process of inflation commenced, and presently the wide portals of the mansions emitted whole bevies of beauties who, like the butterflies, unfolded their colours as they got into the gleam of the sunshine. Up went the white, the lilac, the lavender, and at the sight of the well-known signals boaty-young gentlemen and horsey-young gentlemen, and dressy-young gentlemen, and vacant-young gentlemen, began to draw up—hands in pegtop trousers' pockets—from no one knew where, and fall into rank, the right men, it is to be hoped, in the right places. So the whole sea-board soon floated with crinoline, the lightest of bonnets, and airiest of dresses, organdis, brilliantés, and piqués. Then as the bands began to play, and somebody on shore made a signal to somebody a-float, at the bang of a gun on a lugger-yacht, single and double Dollonds and telescopes came out of their cases ready to point against whatever might appear. And who does the reader think did appear at this most critical moment? Our friend Admiration Jack—Jack dressed within an inch of his life, simpering along as near the fair Rosa as the amplitude of her very pretty broad-sashed blue and white dress would allow. Very beautiful she looked, calm, pensive, and demure, so unlike Miss Giggleton, who came flouncing and twisting about with Captain Ogle, staring in all directions to see who was looking at her. A woman is never satisfied till she has paraded a man. Our friend's appearance had the effect of fanning the flame of the previous day's gossip, and set all parties looking at our newly-arrived beauty. Some thought her very well—some thought her middling—some thought nothing of her. One lady —Miss Tartey—thought she had got a most preposterous sash on.

To our friend Mr. Bunting their criticisms were more pertinent and severe. That man was always playing the fool with some one. Mrs. Salter had seen him dangling after Miss Meadowbank at Baden, Miss Granite said he had behaved extremely ill to a first cousin of hers, while Mrs. Bolsterworth observed, that it would be an act of kindness to tell Rosa's Mamma what sort of a man he was. And here mark the merits of a regatta—just as the hostile criticism was at its height, and there is no saying what mischief might have ensued, "Bang!" went a gun on the bathing-machine battery, with such a stunning sound as caused the nervous ones to shriek and turn the current of indignation against the invisible agent who had ordered it to be fired. How could they make such a noise! What *was* the use of making such a noise! Reader, that gun denoted that the aquatic amusements were about to commence, an amusement in which there always appear to be two distinct and separate interests, those on the water and those on the shore, between whom there is no sort of tie, sympathy, or community of interest. Who there were in the boats we will not stop to inquire—there were no pretty bonnets—

youths in shallow-crowned straws, with clay pipes in their mouths, as if to make sickness a certainty—stout ladies eating prawns and enjoying the breeze, in charge of amphibious landsmen, who may be seen wheeling about baskets of dirty linen on a Monday, and a bunch of portly gentlemen in round jackets and white trousers in the lugger-yacht, who stand consequentially on deck with, as they think, the eyes of England upon them.

Those latter are the great patrons and promoters of the regatta, men who have put down their fives and their threes, and their twos and their ones, and who call themselves the committee of management, though if they can manage not to be sick that is about all they can do. They are just as much in the hands of the Neptune of the place as non-racing stewards are in the hands of a sharp clerk of the course at a country meeting. Still they are flattered by the compliment, and, as honest Sancho Panza says, it is good to have command if it is only over a flock of sheep; so they it is who say when the next BANG from the gun is to start alike the people and the boats, and less we think the promoters could hardly have for their money. The fatties have one advantage in their favour—though it is all against the briskness of the *sailing* part of the regatta—namely, that there is very little wind, and the too well adjusted boats sail and separate and come together again in a very dull uninteresting way, the owners making the same sort of sham struggle that a field of leather plates make in running on the reciprocity system for a town plate or an apocryphal vase, with a purse of gold (a five pound note perhaps) in it. But though the boats are off, no one seems to care whether the Prince Consort, Lord Derby, the Sarah Ann, or the Mary Jane is first, the whole thing being merely the means to another end, and the longer they dawdle and flutter and chop and change, the more opportunity they afford the landsmen to "avail themselves of the regatta;" as the French beau said to the lady who praised her daughter's performance on the piano, "Mademoiselle Delphine a là un bien beau talent," said she, pointing significantly to her as she fingered away; "Allons, faut avaler le concerto," said the gallant, making up to Mamma.

And of all the parties who availed themselves of the regatta none were more industrious than our hero Mr. Bunting, who, despite his nautical pedigree, managed to lose three pairs of gloves to the fair Rosa in the first three matches that were sailed.

But the stout gentlemen with the worshipful white stomachs are going to change the performance, and at a given signal a score of hobbledehoys begin stripping in a boat in the offing, in a way that but at the sea-side would have a very embarrassing effect.

It is wonderful what a difference the locality makes in these Apollo Belvidere matters. If those great naked men we now see proceeding so leisurely from Underdown Cliff to the sea, were to

exhibit themselves that way in a secluded wood in the country, there would be such a running and shrieking and sending for Sergeant Bluemottles, and such a carrying before Squire Lazyman or Mr. Pheasantry. But because they come down upon the open coast, with a grand sea before them, people think nothing of it; and those fair ladies in the mushroom hats, with their back hair spread over their shoulders, sit as unconcernedly by as so many dowagers in a statue gallery.

So again with the fair. What lady would traverse the passages of a house with nothing on but a bathing-gown and slippers? What peeping and prying and listening there would be at the door before she broke cover, and what a hurrying and scuttling there would be after she once got away. If she should happen to meet a man she would never get over it. Yet here in the broad face of day, with myriads of gazers and regiments of telescopes, they come out with the greatest coolness and deliberation, and walk unconcernedly into the sea! So much for a "pure mind in a pure body," as the advertisement says—But, to the boys.

They go on stripping like the grave-digger in Hamlet, until they have all the appearance of Robinson Crusoe's group of savages, when they are bundled out of the boats like a tub full of eels, and told to swim to another boat further up. Away they go, struggling and splashing and gasping and spouting, with an evident desire to be first, a boat following to take up the weakly ones who soon begin tailing, but as the foremost boy's own mother wouldn't know that lank head of hair in the water, it can hardly be expected that the elegant spectators can take more interest in the matter than is comprised in the old saying of "may the best boy win."

This scene, like the flopping ones, must therefore be classed under the "*avaler le concerto*" ones, and doubtless many of the spectators availed themselves of the opportunity. We know one who did, at all events.

Last scene of all—the pantomime of the sea—is the dirty boys in the tubs, a performance that corresponds with the "make a scramble, gents! make a scramble!" of the mud-larks under the windows at Greenwich. A dozen dirty boys in buckets and barrels and wooden contrivances of all sorts, come paddling and rowing alongshore, upsetting themselves and each other in their eager contests and dives after half-pence. This is the most interesting performance, verifying the truth of the saying, that there is nothing so popular as a little excitement in which every one can take a part. Hitherto the fatties have had it all their own way—at least, have thought they had—now all have a finger in the pie, and there is a rushing and running and shouting and screaming and mixing of classes quite different to the late orderly, stationary, line-keeping company.

But this is not for our friends. Miss Rosa has no taste for the

boisterous, nor Mr. Bunting for having his neat laquer-toed boots trampled upon, so as the last group of vociferating urchins go yelling past—some backing Geordey Bacon! others Billy Brown! our ladies rise from their seats; and Mamma, having seen that Miss's *tournure* is all straight, gives the approving nod, and forthwith they turn from the receding performance to retrace their steps to the quieter regions of the west. Then our fair friend and her beau became an object of attention to the forlorn left-at-home damsels. Miss Curling's maid thinking Rosa had "got plenty of sail on hooiver," while Mrs. Broadmeadows's pin-sticker rather stands up for quantity. She wears hoops herself. As women always fall foul of their own sex first, and Rosa's was a face that bore investigation—that is to say, was worth running down, our friend Mr. Jack did not come in for much observation until the return trip, when as he was airing some of his poetry apparently much to our heroine's satisfaction, he was denounced as a conceited-looking man, and one that they wondered Miss Simpers could look so well pleased with. They then began speculating upon who he was. One said, it was young Sir Stephen Sappy; another, Captain Hubbub: a third, Mr. Lounger Hall. Just whoever they happened to have heard of, and didn't know by sight. It takes a longish apprenticeship in a place like the Rocks, with its ever-moving panorama of company, to be able to pelt a man off-hand with his name as the sages of the Clubs in St. James's Street do. There's Brown, there's Jones, there's Robinson, even before the worthies heave well in sight.

But the field of observation is soon to be extended, for the competitive coppers having caused the urchins to desert their boats, a running scramble takes place on shore, which presently resolves itself into a general fight, bringing the cocked-hatted brown and gold-robed Bumble, down with his gilt-headed staff, followed by a suitable number of police, before whom the little ragged army flies in dismay to their homes.

The regatta is over. The large-stomached gentlemen are then released from their labours, and come ashore to dine, with such appetites as the dip, dip, dippings of the boat has left them, Mr. Chousey charging them five shillings a-head extra for dinners, as well on account of the great local event, as because it happened to be the anniversary of the day on which the Clown at Astleys was drawn in a tub on the Thames by two geese.

The general company then distend their crinoline, and set sail, some to the north, some to the east, some to the west, where our friend Mr. Bunting, now in the full intoxication of ardour, was inwardly exclaiming as he looked devotedly at Rosa,

> "Full many a lady
> I have eyed with best regard many a time;
> The harmony of their tongues hath unto bondage

Drawn my too diligent eyes ;
But you, oh ! you
So perfect and so peerless are created,
Of every creature's best."

And so he proceeded, now a little in advance, now alongside the Mamma-guarded beauty past the formidable green blinds and jalousies of Promenade Gardens, through whose light barriers no one knew what envy, hatred, and malice, might be lurking; until they met the tide of regatta-returning company in the narrower pass of Somerset Shore, where the oft-recurring collision of crinoline at length caused

them to turn and bend their steps to the wider region of Victoria Lawn, on whose sun-burnt grass the green and white band of the Roseberry Rocks' Rangers, was booming and blowing away at the Malakhoff Galop. There on its well-trodden space, our friend figured

away in such style, that it soon became current that Admiration Jack was going to be married. And when Herr Staub, whose real name was Tom Snooks, gave the signal for striking up "God save the Queen," the trio wheeled off to Sea-view Place, where at the door of No. 5, Jack begged one of Rosa's pretty little primrose-coloured gloves, as a pattern for bet-paying. So ended the famous Roseberry Rocks' Regatta—an event that was duly chronicled in the newspapers of the day, but without the great advantage that we possess, of having our narrative illustrated.

CHAPTER XV.

PIC-NIC NO. II.

It is a good thing to be able to leave well alone—to finish with a pleasant reminiscence instead of the recollection of a failure. But as it is easier to perceive the wrong than to pursue the right, the difficulty is to say when is the right time to stop. Our former pic-nic had given such general satisfaction—had been so much talked about—praised by those who were present to those who were absent—and the weather, despite Baccoman's daily prognostications to the contrary, seemed so determinedly settled, that little blame could attach to any one for wishing to have another. Indeed, the atmosphere was so clear, and calm, and pure, that it would almost have looked like ingratitude to hint a suspicion that fogs, and storms, and vapours would ever return. It looked as if Alpacas and Silks and Siphonias might be banished with over-shoes altogether. So thought everybody, ladies included, who, by the bye, are not in general the best judges of weather. Did any of our fox-hunting friends ever hazard the inquiry, what sort of a morning it is to the lady's maid, "in reply to the early knock," without being answered with a shivering "v-a-a-ry c-o-old." It's always "v-a-a-ry c-o-old" with them. If, however, they want to get the "Missus" away, then it is always going to be very fine. Never mind what the glass says, even though it be down to much rain. If it comes and dashes the fair dresses, so much the better for them. Ladies shouldn't wear their clothes too long—we mean too long a time, for, of course, sweeping the streets with them is a luxury which they must not be denied, to say nothing of its promoting the same desirable end as the rain.

Well, as we said before, it is a good thing to be able to leave well alone, but the thing is to know when to stop. Our former pic-nic had been eminently successful, and there was no reason why another should not be equally fortunate. The weather—the weather—was

the chief consideration, and that was settled for good.—No fear about the weather. There was nothing to do but beat up for recruits. So said Mrs. Maloney to Mr. Lounger Hall, who repeated it to Mr. Kenworthy, who mentioned it at the full tide of Lipscombe's library, and the thing began to move. The ladies all declared there was nothing so nice as a pic-nic, where every one did what they liked without ceremony or obligation. Names poured in apace; then came the contribution of effects, the assignment of pie, and apportionment of hams, and demands on the cellars, and injunctions for salt, of which latter article there is always either a great abundance, or else a total deficiency.

We dare say it has occurred to many of our readers, in the over-confidence of fine weather security, to postpone their excursions until the very day on which the weather breaks, and such, we regret to say, was the case on the present occasion. Not that it broke in a downright unmistakeable storm, but what is far worse for the fine bonnets, went down in a flickering light of delusion so difficult to realise when we wish the contrary. We know the signs, and we know what they have led to before; but we hope they won't be the true prophets this time. It is true the rays of the sun fall like watered silk on the passage walls; it is true that the cattle go roaming discontentedly about the parched glazy pastures, and we predict rain ere long, but *not to-day*, the next day perhaps, or the one after that.

Country people are far wiser than town ones in the matter of weather. Town people go solely by their smells and their Aneroids, while an intelligent countryman has his signs and his land marks that never deceive him. There isn't a shepherd on the Cheviot hills but sees the coming storm, and takes measures accordingly. The ladies, however, have never any fear about the matter so long as the sun shines. A drop of rain is no warning to them; indeed, they generally pocket the affront, lest noticing it, should bring down some more.

On this occasion, the weather, we are sorry to say, was more than ordinarily deceptive. The sun rose with such resplendent glory, as almost to pull people out of bed, causing the lazy ones to listen to the ticking of their watches, to see that it wasn't eight o'clock instead of six. Then, as the slugs

> —— "on their beds
> Turned their sides and their shoulders and their great heavy heads,"

the dazzling rays shot into the rooms as much as to say, if you won't get up, we'll make your bed too hot to hold you. And as day advanced, and the buff-slippered prawn-eaters turned out of doors, to lay the foundation of appetites for dinner, and the blue and white clad sea-nymphs began dancing and splashing and disporting themselves in the water, appearances still kept up, and though the sun was not

quite so indignant at being looked at, as usual, yet none but the churlish would ever have predicted a change in the weather, let alone rain. One o'clock came, and with it the concomitant tinkling and ringing of bells, and the usual transference of John Thomas from trousers into plush shorts, after which came the sending up of luncheon, and then the exchange of easy morning robes for the rotundity of discomfort, when the inflated ladies became "at home," and sat looming on their chairs, like hens upon broods of chickens.

But it is with the pic-niceras that our more immediate business lies, and as they are supposed (though erroneously) to take this meal out of doors, we must get them underway to the scene as soon as we can. Formerly these sorts of excursions were called "gipsyings," and people dressed themselves accordingly; but since the glorious days of "nothing-to-wear," they come as smart as they can make themselves. Ladies are always very obliging to each other in the matter of attire, always begging each other not to *think* of dressing—to come just as they are—they will not dress they can assure them, and so on; but somehow they always do dress, and the unfortunate believers are left in the lurch. It is a hard thing for a young lady to find herself a "guy" in the midst of splendour. All our Rocks' friends, however, were well up to the "come as you are" injunction, and treated it accordingly. "A delusion and a snare" Mrs. Thomas Trattles called it. As a popular German Baron once said when remonstrated with by his valet on the extravagance of hunting in a rich cut velvet waistcoat with steel buttons, "By my vord, there is nothing too good for foxing in!" so our fair friends seemed to think there was nothing too good for pic-nic-ing in. The best of everything was produced for the occasion, and tender-hearted beauties who would rush to the rescue of a fly in a cream jug, kept the poor sickly milliner girls sewing all night, in order that they might be gay and smart on the morrow. And very gay, and very smart, and very beautiful many of them were, each ambitious maid predicting as she remitted her young lady to the gaze and admiration of the assembled household down below, that she would be the greatest beauty there. It is wonderful how competition destroys this delusion, and how difficult it is to pick out the real belle when a large party of English ladies are assembled. One thinks one is, another another, but few two men agree upon the same one.

The home inspection over, then came the light dust-protecting coverings, and the passage to the carriages, with the gathering of crinoline, and squeezing sideways through the narrow doors to the amusement of the bystanders, who wonder how such dresses are ever to be pushed in. Careful butlers who have delegated their authority to the footmen for the day, aid in the cram; and then as the carriages drive off, stand straddling, hands in trousers' pockets, on the door-steps, with upturned chins, half wondering if it is going to rain. "Might

as well have put an umbrella into the rumble," thinks one. "Very odd if it should come rain to-day, the only one on which I've let 'our people' go without their numbrellas," mutters another. "Might as well have put the cloaks and McIntoshes in," thinks a third, as he gets a whiff of an unsavoury sewer, with which reflections they turn on their heels, close the doors, and retire to their respective apartments. Rosa and Mamma went away about the same time as before, Miss, munificent in white muslin, with cherry-coloured ribbons, and the prettiest of French chip bonnets, trimmed with bouquets formed of the blossom of the cherry intermingled with the fruit. We are happy to add, that it set more over the forehead than these apparently useless articles have lately done.

Away the light-hearted ladies all went, full of the gaiety of coming pleasure, never dimming their happiness with the dulness of doubt. If the still radiant sun was occasionally more scorching than usual, it only raised a pretty parasol, and though the eddying whirl of dust that arose like a drab spectre on Airy Hill might have conjured up fears in the minds of the men, it never does for them to exclaim, when the thinly-clad ladies face danger so gallantly. So all went rolling and riding on in merry serene unconcern, toiling up the same hills, creaking over the same downs, gliding down the same collar-easing slopes and descents, over which the reader accompanied us on the former occasion.

At length Bendlaw Hill is reached, and the Priory-flag is seen flaunting on the now slightly-stirring breeze in the distance. The foremost carriages shoot down the incline, and Baccoman's looking-glass is again in demand.

All is much the same as before — buns, baskets, cigar-boxes, bottles, save that a slight murmuring moan resounds through the leaf-ruffled trees. Mrs. Fothergill, who has just got herself and daughters revised and shook out, wishes it mayn't be going to rain.

"Oh, no, ma'am," asserts Baccoman, "there's no fear of that— never saw weather more settled for fine."

And just as he spoke a large leech-like drop broke on his rubicund nose, as if to contradict him. Another followed, kissing Miss Spinner's fair cheek.

"Only a heat-drop, ma'm—only a heat-drop," asserts Baccoman, with the greatest effrontery, though he is going on his heels, with slit shoes, for his corns are shooting most painfully.

Carriage after carriage then set down their fair occupants in quick succession, and the hilarity of the scene seems to increase with the evident decline of the day. It is fast approaching four o'clock, the most critical hour of the whole, and the water-logged sun presents an appearance that is now quite unmistakeable. Still no one likes to give the alarm, and the gaiety continues. Presently a cold blast drives through the ruins, lifting and shaking the ivy, whistling, and

losing itself in the towers, in the midst of which the sun retires altogether, and the fast-gathering clouds denote a complete change in the scene. A sort of sullen silence reigns throughout, broken only by occasional laughter, or the letting down of the steps of the carriages bringing company. Still Baccoman persists that there is "nothin' to be afeared on"—and the suited young ladies titter and giggle, and think there is not either. It is those who pay the milliners' bills that are generally the most alarmed.

"*There's lightning!*" at length shriek a dozen voices, as a bright blue and yellow flash illumines the scene, and before the fair alarmists can raise their fingers to their ears, a commanding peal of thunder bursts right over-head, re-echoes, and reiterates itself, and then rolls away into the far-distant hills. There is then a grand rush and scramble to get down into the crypt, and the damp dungeon-like vault is quickly filled with fair prisoners, who go paddling about in their thin shoes, feeling for dry places to stand upon. Ladies' shoes somehow "never let in wet." "Candles! candles! candles!" is then the cry, but as these are things that nobody ever thinks of bringing to a pic-nic, our visitors are thrown on Baccoman's scanty stock of dips, who deals them out as if they were gold.

These they stick in their own grease against the massive pillars and groins of the building, just as reckless grooms stick them against their stable-walls, the dips giving a sort of uncertain light that enables the chaperons to detect the whereabouts of indigible couples, and yet not to see those that were more appropriately provided. Trust a lady for not seeing when it suits her. But where in this terrible crash is the lovely cherry ribbons, with her faithful admirer Mr. Bunting? Having ambled carelessly over the downs, drawing down the observation, if not the animadversion of the carriage-company, our friend gave his horse to his smart groom to take back just as Mamma and Miss emerged from unwrapping, and as the day left no doubt of what was coming. Fortunately the persevering Mr. Edmiston having succeeded in advertising one of his pocket-siphonias into him, which the prudent groom had brought, our friend hurried the ladies down-stairs, and spread it on the floor for them to stand upon, so they were then protected both above and below.

Meanwhile, *crash, bang, crash*, goes the roaring reverberating thunder, *w-h-i-s-h* follows the heavy rain, beating perpendicularly, diagonally, all ways at once, deluging the refectory, and at length causing the accumulated body of bubbling water to find vent down the stairs of the crypt. Then there was a rush of gallant young gentlemen to stem the coming torrent, and Baccoman's coat, and Baccoman's boots, and Baccoman's body are engaged to resist the intruder. At length they succeed in turning the current across the court-yard, and the fear of drowning is succeeded by a dread of

suffocation. Still the storm rages, the wind howls, and the searching rain drives the unprotected servants from buttress to buttress,

and from pillar to post, while the unhappy horses stand drooping and ducking under their saturated awning, shaking their heads as if they had all got the megrims. But it is a grand day for Baccoman, who deals out whiskey, rum, gin, hollands, in a way that looks very like imperilling the heads of the drinkers, and with them the safety of those in their Jehu-itical charge. What a drenched sight some of the gaudy footmen present: liquid powder pouring down over their ears on to their laced collars, coat-laps remitting the rain like peacocks' tails, and the pride of polish wholly obliterated from their puffing shoes. Still, if they were to strip and start home naked, there would be a hue-and-cry after them, because

the line would be over the Downs—contra, if the race took place along the shore. However, as few of them find their own clothes, and the clothes of those who do will be none the worse for a washing, they stand it out bravely, laughing at each other, and wondering what their respective "Butlers" would have said if they had been caught in such a storm.

At length there is a sudden lull. The powder of heaven's artillery seems exhausted, and a rattling rain descends as if to quench any fallen fire. It beats upon the hard-baked ground with the vigour of fifty thousand shower-baths. The half-drowned rats of servants then surrender themselves to inevitable fate, and no longer court the succour of unsheltering places. The bright green ivy and they get well washed together. The prisoners down in the crypt now breathe more freely, and there is presently a returning anxiety to know how the dresses are—if Miss Merryville's bonnet is straight, and whether Miss Witchfield has got any of the green damp off the walls, with which she sees other ladies plentifully smeared, on to her new lavender-coloured silk. A sad day it has been for the garments, but worse for the feet, only as pride feels no pain, so ladies never feel damp, and would be dry after walking through a river—provided the road led to a ball. But the extent of the mischief cannot be ascertained until they get unpacked—brought out of the hamper of the crypt, as it were—and at the first report of a gleam of sunshine being visible, there is the usual hurrying out, that always ends by being caught in the tail-shower. Few people have patience enough to wait till the whole thing is over. This then puts the finishing stroke to the fête, save for those who, like Bunting, could whisper—

"With thee conversing, I," &c.,

of whom, of course, there were not enough to keep the thing open. So, after divers twistings and turnings, and wipings and rubbings, and advisings to let it "dry on," it is determined to give in, and hazy-eyed footmen began to call to drowsy-looking coachmen; and after much confusion of horses, and mistaking of cushions, well-washed but undried carriages began to take up, into which the compressed crinolines pass with much greater ease than they got out. As each succeeding vehicle whips off, Baccoman, like the dying man's doctor,

"Takes his leave with signs of sorrow,
Despairing of a fête to-morrow."

Meanwhile our friend Mr. Bunting's pocket siphonia underfoot, and careful protection of Miss Rosa's generous amplitude from the green of the insidious walls, returning her to-day quite as dry and almost as smart as she descended, and John Thomas having early ensconced himself among the beer and the buns in Baccoman's shop, there was little anxiety about looking up the pair-of-horse job vehicle that had

brought them to the scene. So they stand eyeing each other and the departing company, Miss, looking at Bunting—

"In side-long glances from her downcast eye,"

Mr. Bunting thinking she was the greatest beauty he had ever beheld, and wishing his oak-trees might grow to a hundred feet high, and bark be fifty pounds a ton for her sake. At length, and in order not to be last, Mrs. McDermott orders the carriage, intimating that they can take Mr. Bunting home if he likes, which of course he does like. So he steps in after Mamma and Miss amidst knowing nods and winks, and "that's a case, I think," from the remaining bystanders. Away they start up the hill.

"All is now serene," as the street urchins used to say, or as Mr. Bunting observed,

> "The sun has lost his rage: his downward orb
> Shoots nothing now but animating warmth
> And vital lustre; that with various ray
> Lights up the clouds, those beauteous robes of Heaven
> Incessant roll'd into romantic shapes
> The dream of waking fancy!"

The dull glazy landscape looks as fresh as a newly-varnished picture; the herds and flocks return to their renovated bite, and the birds shake out their plumage and carol to the returning warmth. The cabman alone seems insensible alike to situation and scenery, for he whips and jags his horses along, gathering impetus down one hill to shoot up another, in anything but an accommodating way to his passengers. These gentlemen always think the greatest kindness they can do a person is to drive fast. The consequence of all this unwonted speed is, that our friends are at home long before they could wish; but Mrs. McDermott accommodates matters by proposing that our hero should pic-nic with them. So there is an extemporised dinner, partly hot, partly cold; partly home-made, partly got from Isinglass's the neighbouring confectioner's; to all of which Mr. Bunting did ample justice, thinking it was much more rational and comfortable to sit quietly on a chair, with his charmer by his side, than to squeeze into a spider-crawling, sky-canopied recess, with a host of people he did not want to see. And Rosa, being free from the restraint of observing eyes, becomes much more smiling and confiding, so much so, indeed, that when at length Mr. Bunting took his departure, he felt he had nothing to do but propose. And as Perker peeped at him through the area railings, she said he was a deal smarter man than Spink, as she called our other friend—of whom perhaps it is time we were taking some more notice.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HAUNCH OF VENISON.

Among the gradual decline of good old English customs—asking to wine—calling to see instead of to card—keeping birth-days—cutting wedding-cake, and so on, we know of none more regrettable than the omission of the old annual haunch of venison. The others may be looked upon as the

> ——"world's regards,
> That soothes though half untrue;"

but there is a fine substantial reality about the haunch that admits of no mistake. You either get a haunch of venison or you don't; if you do, it promotes conviviality, just as a pack of fox-hounds promotes sport, and you look backward and forward to it as a sort of mile-stone on the highway of pleasure. People remember how jolly they all were at Heartycourt Park, and look forward to being so again when the next haunch comes. Guests will respond to a haunch who will sneer at a "saddle," though the saddle may be the better eating of the two.

Among the keepers up of the good old venison-sending custom was His Grace the Duke of Tergiversation, whose better acquaintance the reader will presently make, as the old schoolmaster used to say when he got a new boy. The Duke had a noble park—fourteen hundred acres of varied grasses—and made a great annual distribution of its produce. For this purpose his Grace's keeper, Mr. Bagwell, kept a regular table of precedence among men, so that the people—those who gave Bag the proper tip at least—could calculate pretty accurately when the accustomed haunch would come. This enabled them to make their preparations accordingly, see who they owed a dinner to, who was absent that usually came, and consider what new guest should fill the vacant place.

Among the earliest recipients of the Ducal haunch, we need scarcely say, was his Grace's banker, Mr. Goldspink; for though no one really wanted or coveted it less, yet, for reasons already indicated, it was deemed good policy to propitiate him. Accordingly one day as our friend was sitting in his little back den of a sweating-room at the bank, now conning his interest-tables, calculating money by the clock, now peeping through a hole he had scratched off the white paint in

the lower part of the window, speculating on the means of the various passers-by, those he would trust—those he would not—he saw Mr. Bagwell's green-and-gold deputy, Mr. Ranger, ride into the market-place on the familiar white pony, with something sticking out of the distended panniers, that immediately struck our banker as destined for him. "Sivin and four's elivin and sivin's eighteen, and nine's twenty-sivin—do believe that's a haunch of venison a comin' for me—and fifteen's forty-two—if it is there'll be a deuce of an overdraw next—and sivin's forty-nine—was just going to write to Mr. Acreage to draw his 'tention to His Grace's 'count—and forty-four is ninety-three—its comin' here, however." So saying, Mr. Goldspink tinkled his little hand-bell, and told Mr. Scorer, the cashier, to take what was coming, but by no manner of means to let the bearer know he was in.

So he sat securely in his little retreat, and heard the bump of delivery on the counter and the loitering heels of the purveyor waiting to know if there was anything to go back.

Having had the satisfaction of seeing him off, he then had the haunch brought into his room, where he held an inquest upon it as it lay on his table. There it was, all right and proper, the orthodox foot attached to show it wasn't donkey, and a clean parchment label, with his own name regularly esquired, as we all are now-a-days, and the Duke of Tergiversation's compliments, with the day on which the buck was killed, so that he mightn't keep it till it was able to walk back of itself. He then took the haunch up by the shank, and found it was heavy, and poked his finger into the fat and approved of that too. "Sivin and four's elivin, and sixteen's twenty-sivin," continued he, drawing back to survey it; "don't know what to do with it now that I've got it," dry-shaving his double chin with his hand as he spoke; "and fifty-four is eighty-one—would rather he'd paid summut on account—and sivin is eighty-eight—got nobody that I want to give a dinner to—and ninety-nine is a hundred and eighty-sivin—no use makin' a party on purpose—and fourteen is two hundred and one—better sell it or give it away than do that."

When he got the haunch home there was another discussion between Mrs. Goldspink and himself as to what should be done with it, both opposing a party on purpose to eat it on account of the expense. "Sivin and four's elivin, and four's fifteen—would cost four or fi' pun, at least—and sivin is twenty-two—what with sweet sauce, puffs, puddins, wine, and what not—and fourteen is thirty-six—besides all our best customers are away—and sivin is forty-three—no use asking a set of second-raters to come—who might think it was a hint they might have 'commodation—and five is forty-eight—better give it away nor that." In this view Mrs. Goldspink agreed, and the weather being intensely hot, and their larder none of the

coolest, it became a matter of consideration who to pawn it off upon quickly. The Gaythorns of Foxberry Green would be the best people, but then they were in Scotland; and the Wedderburns of Harbinger House always got their haunch about the same time. The Bolters, the Ashcrofts, the Skirvings, the Holleydales, and the Sewells, were severally canvassed, but some exception or other taken to each, and the discussion about came to a period or full stop.

"There's Mrs. McDermott," at length suggested our hero No. 1, whose heart hankered after the fair, more especially now when he meditated a trip to Roseberry Rocks races.

"To be sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Goldspink, "the very people. Be a nice present for them;" and forthwith she sent the knock-kneed half errand half footboy off for a basket, into which the Ducal haunch was speedily packed and despatched by that night's mail-train. And they thought they had managed matters very cleverly, and saved themselves an infinity of trouble and expense.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER.

UP to this time all had gone smoothly and well with our friend Mr. Bunting in Sea-View Place. John Thomas now let him in, as a matter of course, and pretty Perker the maid smiled attornment to his coming authority.

Miss received him with cheerful cordial encouragement, and Mamma was quite motherly and leave-them-alone-ical. Now, however, we regret to say things were going to take rather a different turn.

On the same day that the venison came, came one of those suspiciously-written letters that would puzzle an expert to say whether they are the production of a man, a woman, or a child, cautioning our fair friends against the insidious Mr. Bunting, and saying that he was nothing but a needy fortune-hunting adventurer—advising them to question him about his castle and his consequence, and to ask him if he knew Miss Richley, or Miss Meadows, or Miss Featherwood. This was a poser to Mrs. McDermott, who was most thankful that Mrs. Goldspink mentioned in her letter announcing the haunch that Jasper was coming, so that they might trim the boat accordingly. Mr. Bunting had not come out with the specific words of an offer, so Mamma advised Rosa to be cautious and retiring, to keep him going on but to avoid coming to the point—that is to say to a declaration. And they looked at the letter again and again, wondered who had written it, whether it was any one who

wanted him themselves, or some jealous person envious of Rosa. It was very perplexing.

In these days of wonderful science and discovery, when sighs are wafted on wires

"From Indus to the Pole,"

and the sun condescends to take portraits as low as a shilling a minute, it would be a great convenience if Mr. Adolphe Diddler or Didier the mesmeric somnambulist, or some other great necromancer, would invent some process by which the hidden thoughts of parties might be discovered and the deeds done in their absence made known to them. Then our esteemed friend Mr. Admiration Jack would have understood why it was that Mamma was more formal and Miss less confiding, and why instead of the sunny promenade on the gaily thronged esplanades and terraces they preferred a quiet walk on to the Downs, and took the unfrequented line of Brick-field Lane, Ivy Cottage, and Chewcud's Dairy. At first, for want of a necromancer to explain matters, our friend thought they were afraid he was only trifling with fair Rosa's feelings and wanted the tender prop: which he determined to make the very first opportunity; but that was just the very last thing they really did want, and Mamma guarded Miss against it with the most watchful and careful vigilance. No more leavings-alone or getting out of earshot for her. Whatever was said must be in her presence and hearing. So Mr. Jack was put upon a sort of half allowance of love, to be restored to the full diet or not according as things might appear. Three ladies he wouldn't suit seemed rather too many, and Mamma thought it would not do to let Rosa be the fourth, especially if it was to endanger her prospects elsewhere.

However, Mrs. McDermott thought Mr. Bunting might be made useful in expediting the movements of our young turlite Mr. Goldspink, who was not quite so expeditious as the improved celerity of the times would require. Long courtships are not now in favour.

So much for the tender passion; let us now look at the venison. Much the same scene took place in the housekeeper's room in Sea-view Place that had been enacted in Sivin-and-four's little back-room at the Bank. Mrs. Meggison the cook-housekeeper unpacked and exhibited it, Bason the housemaid asked if it was pork, John Thomas replied it was panther; and when Mrs. McDermott appeared, the first question she put was how long it would keep. Now that was just what perplexed Mrs. Meggison, for she knew that a haunch of venison betokened a party and a party caused trouble, and as she considered that she was just as much away for her amusement as her mistress was, she had no idea of being involved in any such complications. So she replied "that she was really afraid it wouldn't keep very long, indeed that it appeared to her quite ready for use, and considering the

weather and the eat of the ouse p'raps the sooner it was used the better." And as she spoke a great buzzing blue-bottle fly settled upon it and seemed to enforce the argument. "And then as to a party," continued Mrs. Meggison, brushing it away, "we have no dish big enough to put it upon; nor indeed anything fit to set before company, nothink but the old-fashioned blue and white pattern, and as to a dessert-set, there aint two dishes alike—indeed I never saw what they call a furnished ouse so badly furnished—one with so little in it—in fact there were no pails, nor no pans, nor no peg to ang nothing upon, and as to the scullery it was a disgrace to be seen, and the kitchen was very little better, and the atties were shemful;" and so she ran on with such a volley of complaints that Mrs. McDermott was glad to beat a retreat at the earliest possible opportunity. It being clear that Mrs. Meggison did not incline to a party, and without the cordial aid of the cook it is little use attempting one, Mrs. McDermott had then to consider what was best to be done with the formidable haunch. Her first impulse was to pack it up and send it down to her neighbour at Privett Grove, the Rev. Dr. Wedlock, but remembering what an explosion a haunch of venison makes in the country, she was fearful it might be traced to its proper source and put down as a mere present of convenience. The same objection held good with regard to Mrs. Surfeit, Mr. Hill, Mr. Shaw, Miss Stern, indeed all the people in those parts. At last she hit upon a person on whom she thought it would be beneficially bestowed, and from whom some equivalent might be expected in return, namely, Mrs. Thomas Trattles, the champion of our now rather down-in-the-market hero, Mr. Bunting. Accordingly she had it repacked, and putting on a clean card label she directed it to "Mrs. T. Trattles, 25, Seagull Place," omitting the date of the kill, "with Mrs. McDermott's compliments," and told John Thomas to deliver it, who gave a stray boy twopence for carrying it, who forthwith went along bolstering all the boys he met on the road. So, on the principle that beating a beefsteak makes it tender, the venison would be improved by the operation.

Mrs. McDermott was right in her calculations, for as soon as Jane Tongs, the maid of all work, and Mrs. Trattles had held their inquisition upon the haunch, turned it and smelt it and poked it and guessed how long it would keep, Mrs. Trattles put on her best fly-away bonnet and new black machinery-lace scarf and came trotting along to make her most grateful acknowledgments for it.

Mrs. McDermott having investigated her visitor's shoulders from the balcony above, hinted Rosa to retire, thinking to pursue her inquiries more advantageously alone. So after the torrent of gratitude had subsided and the state of the weather been discussed, Mrs. McDermott guided the conversation among the pic-nics, the parties, the prospects of the season, and the state of the Roseberry Rocks' heart market generally. They then condescended, as the Scotch say, on

Mr. Bunting in particular. Some people are obliging enough to say anything they see other people want them to say, and Mrs. Thomas Trattles could accommodate herself to circumstances. At first when she thought Mrs. McDermott was full of him, she ran him up, then when Mrs. McDermott rather hesitated she "gave her pause," as Hamlet says, when he considers the bare bodkin question in all its bearings. Certainly she considered he was a very eligible match, but then people might be mistaken, Mrs. McDermott knew; but then she (Mrs. Trattles) always made deductions for exaggeration and had done so in the present instance, and thought he might be fairly set down at ten or fifteen thousand a year, but say ten—ten was very comfortable; competence at least. There was no doubt he had a very fine place in Scotland—a castle—Buntingbury Castle—whether there was a deer park or not she couldn't tell; but there were grouse, for she knew a lady who had some from it, and very good they were. The thing however could be easily ascertained if Mrs. McDermott or any of her friends had any interest in the matter. "Oh no," Mrs. McDermott "did not wish for anything of that sort—only as Mrs. Trattles had introduced him she thought she would know something about him, not that there was anything (hem) at present (hum) and (hem)—only"—— with which innuendo she left Mrs. Trattles to take up the running.

Well Mrs. Trattles would make some inquiries—she knew where to go to exactly, and of course would not compromise Mrs. McDermott; and having now got her cue she presently trotted off to contemplate her venison again and consider "what she should do with it," as Sir Bulwer Lytton would say.

We must now introduce some more characters on the scene.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOHNNY O'DICEY.

If all the victims of misplaced confidence were polled, we take it the great majority of sufferers would prove to have been the dupes of plausible people. We all deprecate plausible people—advise others to be cautious of plausible people, and yet somehow or other are easily caught by plausible people.

The fact is, we don't know they are plausible until they have deceived us. Their extra goodness passes for honesty—suspicious, perhaps, in any one else, but doubtless sincere in them. In fact, we think they are the exception to the general rule, which teaches us to beware of those who profess to be better than their neighbours. So we end in being deceived.

Any one, however,—any one at least on the sunny-side of thirty—

might be fairly excused for being duped by Johnny O'Dicey. The name Johnny inspires confidence. Everybody has a good friend Johnny, and our friend Johnny (if he will allow us to call him so), has such an airy, careless, happy-go-lucky sort of manner, that the inexperienced would think he was the noblest-hearted fellow under the sun—a victim instead of a shark. Always gay, always well dressed, always swinging into coffee-rooms at the critical time, calling for "devils" or hock-and-soda-water, scattering silver without rhyme or reason. No one would suppose that such a man was merely feathering about to catch the scent of some one with money—throwing away a sprat to catch a whale, as it were.

The same at the gaming-table—Johnny dashes down handfuls of sovereigns, apparently at random, leaving the Croupiers to rake them into place—then, if he wins, he goes in for doublets, or, if he loses, comes out with more. He walks away a loser quite as gaily as if he had been a winner.

"Oh, hang it, what's the use of money if it isn't to enjoy oneself!" cries he, twirling his Louis Nap-like moustache. Of course he returns the next morning and has his money all back, with a liberal per-centage on the losses of the dupes he has brought. But that is going too deeply into the secrets of the prison-house. We have only to do with Mr. O'Dicey in his public capacity of man of fashion and youth-lightener of cash. To this end he devotes his whole energies, and makes everything he can contribute. He does everything for effect. His dinners are always the costliest and best. "Let's have everything that's expensive," seems to be the order. The landlords are more obsequious, and the waiters bow lower to him than to anybody else. A stranger would say that Johnny was a man of abundant, over-abundant means, who just played for pleasure. Altogether, he is quite the model of a dashing, off-hand, open-hearted knave, so different to the lynx-eyed Clinker, who goes crawling along to Tattersall's, looking as if he dursn't trust his own shadow, or little Ginger Curlew, who comes sneaking into a room as if he had stolen a pat of butter, and had it in his pocket. For rigging the plucking arrangements of private play, Mr. O'Dicey is also unrivalled. No man can confront or confederate with a cooler, "I haven't the pleasure of knowing you, face"—can produce a pack of cards more innocently or more opportunely, or deprecate play more earnestly than he does. He hates the sight of cards, he will say, frowning, and rubbing his side with his elbows, just as if he were going to do violence to his feelings to oblige the company. But once quietly down, with a sufficient inducement in view, and woe betide the innocent who thinks to rise a winner with him. Johnny knows when to turn the tide of fortune against him, and always makes such an indenture as saves the trouble of coming again. He will lay out of his harvest for months, but will always have it at last, and generally

a rich one. His impudence too is truly delightful. He won't be cut, let it be ever so. "O, hang it, what's the use of shieing!" he will say to an avoiding victim, running his arm through his,—"what's the use of shieing! Pluck up, and let's have another turn, and see if luck won't serve you!" So, even though said victim won't have another turn, he can't say that Johnny didn't offer him one.

By such a man therefore as Mr. O'Dicey, it is no great reflection to be "done," and small blame will attach to our hero No. 1, for having been picked up by him at the Angel at Robberfield Races, at the outset of his sporting career. Johnny, who has the best of information, knows who is in possession, who in reversion, who in remainder, and who in expectancy, had gone down express to make Jasper's acquaintance, and dropped in upon him at an Englishman's "secure hour" (full of cold beef and pickles), and after ringing both coffee-room bells, and storming the waiter, and denouncing the chamber-maid, subsided upon Jasper, by begging the loan of *Bell's Life*, which lay beside him, for *one moment*. This being readily accorded, Johnny hastily conned the advertising columns, and then returned it with a profusion of gratitude, rarely met with in a coffee-room, where grumpiness and suspicion is generally the order of the day. Johnny then again rang the bell furiously, asked if Lord Broadmeadows had come, how long it would take to go to Spankerley Park, with four horses, whether they had any Whitstable oysters, Dunstable larks, or Cambridge brawn, in the house; and finally ordered in anchovy toast, with hock and seltzer water. When the toast came, he declared it was nothing but sprats soaked in brick dust, and ordered it away. The hock he threw into the grate, declaring it was vinegar. He then abused the household collectively and individually, and declared the landlord ought to be ostracised. The steam of disapprobation being thus blown off, he then addressed himself complacently to our friend on a few indifferent topics, as if he hadn't the slightest idea who he was, and presently swung out of the room.

Such an epicure, so elaborately got up, for Johnny sported a bran new "Forester"-shaped Lincoln and Bennett, and was delicately toned down in brown and velvet, to harmonise with the colour of his whiskers and hair, could not but excite the admiration of a country-bred youth, like our Jasper, who felt flattered by the notice of such a man, and was sorry he had not stayed a little longer. And when he met him the next morning in High Street he gladly returned Johnny's familiar nod, and was presently pleased to find his arm through his on his way to the News-room. A few more well arranged casual interviews, and an acquaintance was established. How are you Goldspink? How are you O'Dicey? and so on.

Hitherto Jasper's turf, or rather money-making inclinations, had been fostered and encouraged by the Ostler's son, at the Bear and Ragged Staff Inn of his native town, who by one of those turf freaks

of fortune, that most people have witnessed, had suddenly risen from rags and ignorance, into broad cloth and impudence, to say nothing of rings, and chains, and other the paraphernalia of elegance.

To oust such a genius as this required little effort on the part of our friend, who indeed rather sneered him out of countenance than condescended to a regular remonstrance, and at the time of our story Johnny O'Dicey was completely installed in the direction of Jasper's sporting, or rather gambling propensities. The great spread of blackleg-ism making it impossible to buy all backbiters off, Johnny adopted the anti-turf, anti-betting tone, advising Jasper to be wary, cautioning him who to bet with, always impressing upon his mind the sound doctrine, that it is easier to win than to get paid, and rather acting the part of a guardian than otherwise. Johnny did not show much with Jasper in public, preferring to drop upon him in a railway train, or to spend a quiet evening with him in an inn. Railways have made racing wonderfully accessible, and contributed not a little to the gambling—miscalled sporting—propensities of the day. There are fifty "legs" now for one that there was five-and-twenty years ago. So Johnny met Jasper at Exeter, and Manchester, and Malton, and elsewhere, always friendly and admonitory, but never showing the slightest inclination to have any pecuniary transactions with him himself. Jasper's hour was not yet come! But it was approaching.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TURF.

Now that steam has superseded horse-power, and Eclipse himself would cut a poor figure alongside the electric telegraph, it becomes a question whether country races are not more productive of evil than of good. They foster an enormous amount of knavery and idleness, to which the noblest animal is made subservient, and only put money into the pockets of those for whom the public generally have little taste, feeling, or community of interest. Racing is at best, too, but an idle lounging pursuit, producing none of the healthful invigorating enjoyment attendant upon sports in which all can take a part.

First little gentlemen in jackets and leathers are in convulsions: now Aunt Sally is in the ascendant: next drums and clanging cymbals disturb the serenity of the scene, and hollow-cheeked jaded mountebanks dance and shout and pretend to be joyful in all the daylight exposure of paint, tawdry tinsel, and glazed calico.

Though the race-horse is a beautiful animal to look at, in all its pride of silken-coated glory, the spurring emulation of the race-course is not to be compared to the generous enjoyment of the hunter, who,

equally with his rider, partakes of the enthusiasm of the scene. There is another distinction between the two—you are always cautioned to keep out of the reach of the racer's insidious lash out with one leg, which can break a limb quite as effectually as two, while it is well known that a hunter will never hurt a man if he can help it. See how they roll to get clear of a rider when down.

Whatever support the public-house interest may require in other places, in order to keep the landlords' gigs a-going, and their wives in hoops and feathers, Roseberry Rocks certainly has no need of any extraneous aid, for she is a fine legitimate attraction of herself and an infusion of gamblers, blacklegs, and pickpockets, adds neither to the purity nor the respectability of the place. Yet races they have, and announcements are made with great sport anticipated, and stewards are victimised, and money screwed out of everybody and from every available source. And for what? To encourage our noble breed of horses? To promote the pastime of the people? Not a bit of it! They would be quite as much amused with a donkey race. But in order that the gamblers may have a field day and rig the betting lists from one end of the kingdom to the other. As to the interest the people take in a race on account of the owners of the horses, that is a long exploded fallacy, for half the horses run in false names, and no one knows but Captain Plantagenet Gascoine's brown horse Lord Clyde may belong to Bitterbeer the sporting publican in Bermondsey, or Mr. Mainwaring Jackson's pretty bay mare Sweet Violet to Mr. Arsenic the advertising quack doctor—the "honorable secrecy" gentleman who pollutes the country with his pestilent bills. Then the railways, which have done so much in be-winging the world, have lent a hand to racing rascality, for whereas in the olden days of road travelling, a horse could not go out of a certain track, off a certain circuit as it were; now they can be put into a truck and whisked from one end of the kingdom to the other, and alight whenever there is a chance of picking up money, either by winning or losing, for one is oftentimes quite as profitable as the other. And that fact alone is enough to destroy the interest in a race, for as there is no secret so close as that between a rider and his horse, so though the little gentleman in black and yellow may work and flourish and appear emulous to win, there is no saying but his orders may be exactly the reverse, and at the proper time he will give the gentle pull that enables red and white on the grey to slip in half a head before him. Then black and yellow will dismount and jump frantically about—just like the decoy at the thimble-rig table when he finds the real countryman losing. Dash it! how disappointed he is!

It is singular how the adage, that ill-gotten money never prospers, often seems to hold good with regard to turf matters. Take Robberfield, for instance, where half the people think to live for the whole year upon what they can screw out of visitors for one week, and where every-

thing is charged a guinea—a guinea for a bed, a guinea for a dinner, a guinea for the rooms, a guinea for the stand, until a poor victimised foreigner once declared it ought to be called the guinea meeting. Well, nobody is ever any the better for it; the money seems to go as fast as it comes; and instead of the upper classes staying and entertaining their friends as formerly, they fly the place as they would an infected city.

Then come the lords of the creation, as they think themselves—fellows from the gaming-houses, the saloons, and the stews, riotous in jewellery—who call themselves by the conveniently indefinite title of the "London gents," and who go swaggering about denouncing the natives, and declaring there is nothing good enough for them in the place—sort of Brummagem O'Diceys. In fact, Robberfield may be looked upon as the grand mart or climax of rascality, where touting and hocussing, and lameing and lying, all the misadventures that poor horseflesh is liable to, are carried on upon the grandest and most scientific scale—the whole place seeming to be polluted; whereas at the majority of country meetings the impure stream only permeates the otherwise healthy population and marks its course as it goes.

Twenty, or five-and-twenty, years have made a wonderful change in racing affairs, the wave of the turf apparently having broken, burying all the gentlemen and bringing the mud of the sea to the surface. Formerly the real professional book-making betting-men were few and far between, who operated largely on their own accounts; now there is a perfect myriad of middle-men who advertise their infallible winning "secrets" with as much ingenuity and pertinacity as Rowland used to advertise his "Incomparable Oil Macassar." Why, if these men really know what they profess, do they not go into the market and make their own fortunes instead of offering to help other people to make theirs. Betting, where parties are sure to win, requires no capital, nothing but a metallic-pencilled pocket-book and the usual stock of easy impudence with which these gentlemen are generally sufficiently endowed. Indeed, with the exception of small horse-dealers, fellows who will haggle for a month before they will give twenty pounds for a horse, and yet who think on the strength of being horse-dealers they may stare and stop any gentleman and ask "what he will take for his oss," there are few people less diffident than the small legs, who by confusing the term sportsmen with sporting men (alias gamblers) think there is a sort of freemasonry of equality that entitles them to button-hole and "how are ye, old boy?" anybody. Were the exertions of these worthies confined to victimising each other, no one would take any notice of their existence, but they are a growing and a dangerous evil, and one that completely baffles the efforts of the legislature to suppress them.

So soon as the hydra-headed monster seems extinguished in one shape, it arises as fresh and formidable as ever in another. The

Commission men — "the sporting facts and golden fancies," The back the jockey and not the horse, "the golden secret gratis," &c. advertisers — exercise just the same pernicious influence upon the lower orders throughout the country generally, that the silver and copper Hells used to exercise upon those of the metropolis. Every person is enabled and encouraged to what they call "speculate," that is to say, gamble; and when things go wrong, which they always do sooner or later, we all know what is the consequence. The master's plate goes, the mistress's jewels, or anybody's money that happens to be handy. We see the result at the police offices every day. Now it can never be said that all this arises from an Englishman's innate love for a horse, for ninety-nine out of a hundred of these parties never see the horses at all; still less can it be from any interest attaching to their owners, for, as we said before, half of them are running in false names; so it must just be a spirit of gambling and want of excitement that cannot be suppressed, breaking out now in betting shops, now in Bride Lane, and which doubtless, if necessary, would be pursued up in a balloon. It is worthy the consideration of a bran new Parliament, whether the tastes of the people might not be turned to account by the re-establishment of the good old lotteries, when "Bish and Carrol!!!" with their thirty-thousand-pound prizes, contended with "Day and Martin" for the hoardings of the streets and the dead walls of the suburbs. Then, at all events, if a master was robbed in order that his servant might buy a ticket, he would have the satisfaction of knowing that the rogue had contributed something to the service of the state.

We suspect that gentlemen were formerly much more scrupulous about their sporting associates than they are now, and that whatever wagering went on was among themselves, and not just with anybody that they thought would pay. Though there was not a tithe of the betting that there is now, it took a wider and more varied range, including carriage matches, riding matches, leaping matches, time matches, and even the apparently intractable subject of a fox hunt, was occasionally brought into account. In the records of that land of sporting, Yorkshire, we read an account how Colonel Thornton received a piece of plate from Sir Harry Featherstone, and Sir John Ramsden, Barts., as a compromise to a bet made in honour of a Hambleton fox. Colonel Thornton, by his original bet, engaged, it seems, for three hundred guineas, p. p., to find a fox at Hunt's Whin, or in the Easingwold country, that after Christmas, 1779, should run twenty miles, the day to be fixed and the morning approved by Colonel Thornton, and to be determined by Sir John Ramsden or Sir Harry Featherstone, or the company. It seems that the Colonel was as good as his word, for a certificate, signed by five gentlemen, states, that on the appointed day a fox broke off in view of the hounds and company, which fox was killed after a continued burst (there not being one check), by the

different watches, for two hours and thirty-eight minutes; and the certificate states that the fox ran at least twenty-eight miles! Two hours and thirty-eight minutes! Hear that, ye Leicestershire swells, with your thirty-eight minutes!

But that is nothing compared to a run that took place at the Boroughbridge Meeting on the 13th of March, 1783, on the occasion of a match between the Earl of Effingham and Colonel Thornton's hounds. Fourteen gentlemen sign a certificate saying, "that the hounds found at twenty-seven minutes past nine, and, except the space of near half an hour taken in bolting the fox from a rabbit hole, had a continued run until five o'clock, when they had an *entopé;* and after repeated views they killed him, at fourteen minutes past five, by the different watches." A "☞" adds, "It was supposed that a greater number of horses died in the field than was ever known on such an occasion." No wonder, say we, considering the length of the chase and the hasty-pudding condition of the horses in those days. But if those horses were soft, the foxes were strong; and with the open country of former days before them, would often tell a tale fatal to the steed. That, however, is getting into the pleasures of the chase, instead of the impurities of the turf, to which let us now return.

People who look upon race-meetings like showers-of-rain sort of things, that come of themselves, natural phenomenons of nature as it were, know little of the craft, subtlety, and anxiety requisite for getting them up. The canvassing of victims for stewards, the speculations as to who will draw the most company, the taking of nominations, and the probable destination of the same, to say nothing of the speechifying soft-sawdering abilities requisite for the ordinary and the more active abilities of the ball-room at meetings where balls are still attempted. All these and a host of other considerations, require infinite care and consideration on the parts of the selectors of stewards, who are oftentimes third-rate publicans over their potations. Nor are the stewards' cares confined to their own years of office, for they are expected to perform acts of husbandry for the incoming tenants, by canvassing for subscriptions, and also to contribute handsomely themselves, the amount being seldom specified until it is too late to retract. They are also expected to exert themselves to draw others into the stewardship snare.

In this, the decoy-duck department, we are sorry to say, they sometimes enlist the assistance of the fair, and elegant high-bred beauties will go smiling and simpering about, led by noble lords, soliciting contributions from the very scum and scourings of society. And as no one can take flight at the approach of a lady, so the gallant men are obliged to stand their ground, and give their names with the best grace they can, each thinking the lady smiles more sweetly upon him than upon any one else. "Five pounds, *only* five pounds," lisps the beauty,

and as the thing does not come off till next year, when the legs are *sure* to be rich, they give their noble names accordingly. It is wonderful what that little word "only" has to answer for, especially when backed by the enchantment of distance. "Money down" has a wonderful effect in curbing both extravagance and spurious liberality. With these preliminary observations, let us proceed to our particular *rendezvous*.

CHAPTER XX.

CHOOSING STEWARDS.

Although, as we said before, Roseberry Rocks require no adventitious aid, such as racing, to make the place attractive, yet the worshipful company of leather-platers and legs cannot afford to dispense with the plunder the races produce. There is a town-plate, a tradesman's-purse, a county member's cup, and a borough member's contributions, all of which require to be fairly apportioned among the fraternity. The money is to be given, and therefore why shouldn't they get it? It would be wasted if they didn't. Now town's-plates, and tradesmen's purses, are all fair and legitimate enough, the money fructifies in the place as it were; but why Members of Parliament should be thus mulct for serving their country does seem a most unreasonable arrangement. Is it not enough that they should be condemned to hard-labour, day and night, on committees, and in the House of Commons running like waiters at the sound of the Speaker's bell, without being also made to pay for performing the labour. We should grumble uncommonly if our good publishers, Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, were to make us pay them for printing and publishing this book. Formerly a Member was looked upon as a sort of milch-cow—a person whom everybody sucked. The old race of country-gentlemen, if they didn't drive bodily up to their M.P.'s houses, bag and baggage, when they arrived in town, considered at all events that they had an indefeasible right to a knife-and-fork at their tables, whenever they liked to come. If they didn't get it, woe-betide the M.P. at the next election. The consequence was, that none but great four-horse — sometimes "two-four" — powers could aspire to a county representation. The mere subscriptions were enough to deter any man of moderate means — building churches, endowing schools, erecting bridges, making roads, aiding infirmaries, to say nothing of the minor demands of promiscuous miscellaneous charity, for replacing dead horses, resuscitating old cows, redeeming patent mangles, &c. Those foxes' breeding-earths, the Clubs, have enabled the M.P.s to shake the Old Men of the land

off their shoulders in the way of hospitality, but the grievance of subscriptions—paying for the privilege of working—remains in full force to the present day. The consequence is, that resident local gentlemen will not represent places in their own neighbourhoods, and stragglers and strangers are brought from afar. This is all wrong: people should consider the sacrifices Members make in attending to their interests, and lighten their burthens as much as possible, instead of increasing them.

At our peculiar borough, the licensed "witler's" interest is too strong to allow of the Members slighting their demands, and if they required double the amount of subscriptions they now get, they must have it. Mr. Tim Boldero, the auctioneering, coal-dealing, electioneering, ale-store-keeping clerk of the course, is what the newspapers call far too active, energetic, and indefatigable to let a chance slip, or any one escape. He is always after somebody or another. The sight of Tim's little, bustling, round-about, satincy figure is enough to make people quail. Tim's great difficulty about his races, not an uncommon one we believe, is in getting stewards. Most people have been caught in the stewardship trap, and understand the nature of the compliment. Equally stale is the patriotic story about supporting our unrivalled breed of horses, and so subjugating the world. Why, there is scarcely a horse in the kingdom but what might be bought to go out of it. It is therefore only the very verdant and excessively fussy, unemployed gentry, that the promoters of the sport have to prey upon. Some great people will lend their names on the distinct understanding that it is not to cost them anything, and that they are not to be expected to act. Then comes the diplomacy of supplying their places. In this, our Comet year, the gratitude of Lord Fricandeau de Veau, for having recovered his precious appetite at the Rocks, being equalled only by that of the Earl of Aldborough to Mr. Holloway for curing his shocking bad leg, had caused his Lordship to permit his name to be placed on the list of stewards, and now that the time for filling the office had arrived, he had written one of those rivulets of manuscript and meadow of margin letters, which, with an imposing seal outside, and a cheque within, go so far to propitiate mankind, expressing his deep regret to "Timothy Boldero, Esquire, &c., &c., that unavoidable circumstances prevented the pleasure, &c., which however, &c., place easily supplied, &c.," and Tim went about showing the letter, and talking of his Lordship as if he was one of his daily correspondents. And Tim put it to several, as he thought, ambitious men, Captain Caret, Sir George Greygoose, Mr. Hiatus, Mr. Lounger Hall, and others, if they would like to officiate for his Lordship; but somehow or other they all took time to consider, and ended in declining the honour. At length a benign chance brought Tim's black satin vest in contact with Sir Felix Flexible's blue coat and buff waistcoat, as the

latter aired himself at the high-tide of fashion along the grand esplanade. Mr. Boldero, who knew Sir Felix's valet, and of course his master's foibles, made a grand ariel sweep with his white felt hat when he met him, which completely brought the Baronet to his bearings.

Sir Felix was a happy man, for he was not only on excellent terms with himself, but he fully believed that everybody else was equally enamoured of him. While other men are fretting, and fuming, and fancying themselves slighted, Sir Felix is always chuckling, and smiling, and thinking himself highly complimented. If Her Majesty makes one of her gracious bows to the gregarious horsemen assembled in the Park, Sir Felix always appropriates the whole of it to himself, saying to his toadey at his side, "Ah, that's to *me*—saw me at the Levée—flattering—very flattering indeed," and forthwith he trots off to intercept another bow at another point. So with everything else. He is always the hero of every assembly, the man who directs the movements, and controls the rest.

Mr. Timothy Boldero's strutting, confident, Lord Mayor-like manner, at the same time so respectful to Sir Felix, eminently paved the way for pouring the leperous distilment about the stewardship into his ear, which Tim did most adroitly, more than half insinuating that the Right Honourable Lord Fricandeau de Veau had especially named Sir Felix to represent him.

"Has he, indeed?" smiled the Baronet, bowing graciously; "flattering—very flattering, indeed—feel the compliment," laying his hand upon his heart. "Shall write to his Lordship by this night's post—thank him for the honour—tell him duly appreciate the compliment, and that I shall be proud to accept the office."

And Sir Felix, who was fond of the sound of his own voice, then commenced conning over his speech for the ordinary, for which purpose he looked up such books as he thought would enlighten him on the subject. And with very little trouble—for a smattering of learning is easily obtained now-a-days, he got up the heads of a speech, commencing with a little antiquity, and then entering upon the great national subject generally, which he laboured away at, as he mistakenly thought in private, without stint or measure to his voice. So he went pacing up and down his apartment, in the Minerva Mansion, sawing the air, and mouthing out "gentlemen" this, and "gentlemen" that, reminding his imaginary audience how absorbing the Olympic games were, when Philip, King of Macedon, and Hiero, King of Syracuse, contended for the prize. He then got into England, recalling the fact that several race-horses were sent by Hugh Capet, in the ninth century, as a present to Athelstane, and then touching with a masterly hand upon the successive monarchs who had patronised the turf, until he came down to modern times, when feeling that the Crown had gradually been withdrawing from its impurities, he proceeded to give the Rocks races

a lift, by pointing out the advantage they were of to that particular place. And so he wound up by calling for a bumper-toast, with all the honours, to the Noble British Turf!

That is the rehearsal, the reader will understand, of what Sir Felix is going to say.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. JASPER GOLDSPINK.

It now required a little management on the part of our fair friends in Sea View Place to keep matters straight as between the unseen suitors; but this is just the sort of diplomacy that ladies excel in, and in which they may be safely left to themselves. As already intimated, they had begun to air Mr. Bunting out the back way, an arrangement which, though unusual where parading is generally the order of the day—our

"With thee conversing,"

friend by no means objected to; indeed rather approved of, and flattered himself it was done to give him every opportunity of cultivating the young lady's acquaintance. A clever woman will keep half a dozen men in tow, each believing himself the favoured one, and pitying the rest.

A lady—a lady in the secret at least—would have seen that our pretty friend dimpled her fair cheeks more with smiles when Mr. Admiration Jack and she were comparatively unobserved than when they encountered the public gaze, when Miss would bridle up, take space, and seem unconcerned; but as every woman is a separate enigma, and Mr. Bunting's opinion of himself none of the meanest, he set the reserve of one moment off against the affability of the next, and took it all to the good. Even when Mrs. McDermot talked of a young friend they had coming down to the races, and drew the name of Mr. Goldspink incidentally upon the *tapis*, asking our hero No. 2, if he knew him, Mr. Bunting replied, with upraised eyebrows and an indifferent sort of shake of the head—

No, he "had never heard of him," and turned the conversation back to where it was before. Hear of him and see him too, however, he was now about to do, and as our readers would perhaps like to have a look at him too, we will now introduce him to the public generally.

Mr. Jasper Goldspink, or Mr. Goldspink junior, as he might with greater advantage be called, was just twenty-three, a much more manageable—catchable age at least—than Mr. Bunting, who, in boarding-shool parlance, was an old man of thirty with the experience of a man of forty. Though one would not expect much from the son of old "sivin-and-four," yet with the inestimable advantage of youth,

coupled with the polish our friend Mr. O'Dicey had given him, through the medium of that prince of decorators, Mr. Selvage, whose little back shop, hung round with the "old masters," is so suggestive of liberality and sixty per cent. discount—young Goldspink was now a nice, plump, fair-haired, middle-sized youth, with if not an expressive, by no means an unpleasing countenance, and manners as good as those of the majority of mankind, when to be as unmannerly as possible seems to be the order of the day. Talk as we will about our superior refinement—it is a good deal coat and waistcoat refinement.

We are not half so courteous or encouraging to strangers as the old school, whose first object was to set every one at ease, and who did not wait for an introduction to proffer a smile and a bow. What gentleman of the last century would come swinging through a held-open door without making the slightest acknowledgment, as we see parties doing at the clubs every day? That, however, is the getting into the dancing and deportment line, our business is with the high court of Cupid, whither let us now repair.

Were it not that every day's experience shows how people are often talked into matrimony, and that Rosa's experience of life was very limited, one would have thought that some one whose appearance was more opposite to her own would have taken her young fancy; but then those contrasts are not to be procured in the country—another proof of the advantage of coming to a place like the Rocks, where all sorts and sizes of men are presented to the unsuited. So, if affairs matrimonial are regulated on the rule-of-contrary principle—dark men liking fair maids, and little ladies preferring tall men—our friend Mr. Admiration Bunting's dark hair and superior stature would operate as a set-off against Mr. Goldspink's better ascertained metallic properties.

There however the reader has them both, and now Mamma must be left to manœuvre them according as the barometer of riches seems to incline. At present the new comer had rather the pull, as the racing people call it, in his favour, consequent upon the suspicion that had been thrown on Mr. Bunting's possessions. On the morning of Mr. Goldspink's arrival, our poetical friend having had his usual bye-way promenade up Lavender Lane, Green Court Terrace, and so by Prospect Place into the Larkfield Downs, was dismissed for the day, with an intimation that the ladies would not be at home in the evening, and took his departure with the same confident security with which Mr. Goldspink rang the door bell about an hour afterwards. John Thomas smiled a welcome greeting when he saw their country neighbour filling the portals of their sea-side mansion, and forthwith motioned him to enter without waiting for any inquiry as to whether anybody was at home or not. And Mr. Goldspink having deposited his hat and hunting-stick—last *souvenir* of the disagreeable chase—on the entrance hall

table, as if he had come for a sit, followed the noiseless servant up stairs and was presently ushered into the sun-obscured back drawing-room, where the lovely Rosa was reclining, *Punch* in hand, in the glorious amplitude of a well got-up blue and white tarlatan muslin. Never having seen her with her plainly dressed hair, our suitor did not at first recognise her in the gloom of the apartment, and made her a bow, thinking it was some young lady on a visit; and it was not until Rosa advanced with a friendly hand to greet him that he saw his mistake. He then gladly coalesced, and was presently in the full swing of country cordiality—more than it would have done Mr. Bunting good to see.

In due time, a liberal ten minutes or so, Mamma came sidling in, all smiles and graciousness, as if she never thought of admitting any rival near his fair; and after due inquiries respecting Papa and Mamma, and the Wedderburns, and the Holleydales, and the Simeys, and asking how things were looking in the country, Mrs. McDermott gradually contracted the field of speculation, and asked Jasper how he thought Rosa was looking, and how he liked her with her hair in bands. And then our hero related how he actually didn't know her at first, and then having taken a refreshing stare, he began doubting whether he didn't like her best in ringlets; he wasn't sure, but he thought he did. Yes, he did; and then Mamma took the plain side, and so it became a question of "Plain or Ringlets?" for a time, till something else usurped its place.

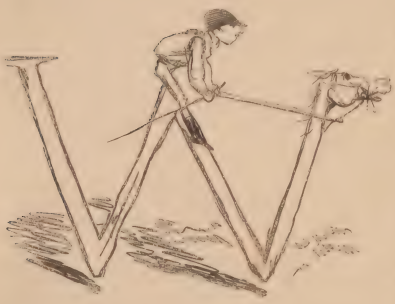
When John Thomas descended by three steps at a time into the lower regions, after ushering our hero up stairs, there was such a scuttling, and laughing, and laying of heads together, and wondering "how it would be." Fairplay or Stirling, or Barker and Marshall—any of the betting fraternity—might have made a book upon the event. It had been generally thought by the household, that our fair friend had cried off with the old love before she began with the new. Now things assumed a different aspect. Which would it be? was the question. There was evidently competition. Mrs. Meggison, the cook, still thought it would be Spink. "She didn't know why, but she thought it would be Spink—a neighbour's bairn you see." Miss Perker, Rosa's maid, who had been most judiciously complimented by Mr. Bunting with a very pretty pink satin scarf, inclined towards him. "She was sure, if she had her choice, she knew which she would take. Spink hadn't half the blandishment of Bunting." John Thomas was almost neutral—didn't know which to think—and Jane Towel, the next door neighbour's housemaid, who had stepped in to take a surreptitious tea, having only seen Mr. Bunting, could not give an opinion. So the down stairs' debate was adjourned.

Meanwhile our friend Jasper had his family dinner, and his family walk (a retired one), and his family tea, and altogether felt like one of the family. At length he took his departure, after making his racing

arrangements with them for the morrow. And Mamma and Miss then talked the two gallants over, Mamma thinking it would be well for Rosa to keep back a little,—at all events not to show any decided preference when they were together — an event that there seemed little probability of averting. If Mr. Bunting had the fine castle and all the money Mrs. Trattles talked about, well and good; if not, Mr. Goldspink would be extremely well off, and there was no doubt the Duke of Tergiversation and the old gentleman would get agreed sooner or later for the estate our banker wanted to buy, and so enable him to build a house in the country—so that either way, Miss would be very comfortable—with which agreeable conviction Mamma and Miss retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROSEBERRY ROCKS RACE COURSE.



E sometimes think the elements are unfavourable to Racing. Whether it is that the flimsey nature of people's attire—the silken jackets and paper boots of the jockies, the gauze and gossamer of the ladies, so pretty in sunshine, so futile in showers—makes one more than ordinarily susceptible to the slightest variations of the atmosphere, or whether it is that so much ruinable finery is too great a temptation for Jupiter Pluvius, we know not, but there certainly often does seem a disposition to give the milliners the benefit of the day by watering the silks and drenching the assembly. How seldom an Epsom, for instance, is got over without some tremendous descent. If the weather has been ever so fine previously, it is almost sure to change about then. So soon as the adventurous travellers get well away from their homes, and a delicate coating of dust has permeated the garments, peacocks begin to scream, donkeys to bray, dust to rise in corkscrew eddying curls, and the whole face of nature to give these unmistakeable yearnings for drink that a sot displays as he sneaks round a street-corner to get into the splendidly illuminated gin palace. Then more screams, more brays, more dust, and great spattering drops that beat like shillings as they fall, are the prelude to the disastrous rain that with all the aid of heads up and umbrellas hoisted, just damages the finery sufficiently to make it finery no more. And the curious contortions of ribbons, and flowers, and

gauze, called by courtesy, bonnets, are reduced to the value of as many pence as they before represented pounds.

If racing was brought home to every man's door, as was attempted some years since on the present site of Notting Hill, how few people would be at the trouble of going to them. A quiet walk in Kensington Gardens or a penny or twopenny seat in the Park, with the aristocracy of England paraded before them, would be considered a much better thing. It is the out-ing from town, the fun of the rail or the road, the feasting, the fresh air of the downs and the heath, above all, the "once-a-year-ish-ness" of the thing that keeps the great meetings popular. Nine-tenths of the visitors know nothing about the horses or their owners or their riders, or care to confuse themselves about the odds on animals that may be running to win or lose just as it suits their owners' pockets.

Epsom, too, generally inaugurates summer, for however many false starts Dame Nature may make with her mis-called springs, it is seldom much before Epsom that there is any downright genial outburst of warm that sets things a-growing almost perceptibly, and does in a night what spring has been nibbling at for a month. Then the cattle get a full bite of rich succulent grass, and lilacs and laburnums, and pink and white thorns—all the flowering tribe—mingle their rich hues with the clean newly-burst foliage and the golden-tipped grateful evergreens, that have helped us so handsomely through the winter. How trim and nice and comfortable all the villas, and houses, and parks, and places look as we pass them in quick succession, each containing a little world of its own.

Between Epsom and Ascott there is a good interval which is generally filled up with broken umbrella-ish sort of weather, better for turnip-sowing than for sitting in the park, which generally clears itself off with a good blue sheet-lightning thunder-storm, and a copious warm rain at the races, which finishes the proclamation of summer, after which people may safely come up from the country with the certainty of not wanting fires. To those who make an annual sight-seeing visit, this is decidedly the best time, a month of fine weather being far more available than six weeks of broken alternations of sunshine and showers.

The road to Roseberry Rocks race-course does not exhibit any great amount of rural or floricultural beauty, whatever it may say for the enterprise of the dairy-farmers, who, with the aid of that great benefactor "muck," succeed in raising heavy green crops on as unpromising a looking staple as that of the sea-shore itself. Neither, whatever mischief it may lead to, can it be said to possess the "*facilis descensus Averni*" quality, for it is extremely difficult to get at, being up a very steep hill, to which a hired-by-the-hour-flyman considers it necessary to pause, and block his wheel once or twice, if not to ease his animal by taking a short walk himself, though the job-gentleman

generally trots, angling the severity of the rise as he goes, thus performing two journies to his rival's one. Thanks to the able legislation of Mr. Fitzroy, the London cabman has become a model both in the ways of charges and civility for the country one to follow.

The summit of the Roseberry Rocks' Mont Blanc being at length attained, a goodly scene bursts upon the view. To the south is the pure glittering sail-dotted sea, next the clean, white stuccoed town stretching extensively along the equally white cliffs; then the circular green course, with its handsome stand, and distant white posts on the brow of the hills, standing in bold relief against the clear blue sky; anon the sheep-dotted downs, backed by the flourishing woods and enclosures of the vale. One almost feels it a pity that so pure and healthful a place should be polluted by the scenes that occasionally take place upon it. Still, if there is a breath of wind stirring it is sure to be had there, and many have been the ejaculations and regrets of the fair after toiling up the sun-roasting hill, at not having brought "something warmer" to brave the breezes of the heights. On this particular occasion rude Boreas was more than ordinarily boisterous, and having a great breadth of petticoat to play upon, there was a corresponding inflation of Crinoline, many of the fair ladies on emerging from their carriages at the stand being driven past their port like peacocks with their tails up on a windy day.

Railways which have condensed our cares, have condensed our pleasures too, and taught us that novelty and not repetition is the true source of enjoyment. Hence, race-meetings which used to be elaborated and attenuated over a whole week, sometimes enlisting the Sunday at each end into the bargain, for the purposes of the publicans, have gradually shrunk into half their proportions, and yet there is seldom more than one day kept up with anything like interest or spirit. People find that railways enable them to shoot out far away, see friends they had rarely met, and visit places they had only heard of, instead of being doomed to the perpetual horse-in-the-mill lives that their forefathers led. Even at our particular watering-place, where pleasure is the real business of life, with the race-course so near as to be only a walk or shilling's worth of fly, people think one day quite enough, and some disdain even that. Of course, the show-day is the one upon which Mr. Shiney, the silversmith, shares the prize with the winner in the shape of a classical design for some extremely out-of-the-way appendage that a nobleman might be puzzled to place, let alone a man who perhaps hasn't even a three-legged stool to put it upon, an inconvenience, however, that Mr. Shiney is always ready to rectify by taking it back at the price of old silver. Hence what is most attractive to the company is the least so to the turfite, who thinks the chaste design of golden sovereigns is far better than any model the old masters can supply.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JACK AND JASPER.

It was on the memorable Cup or rather Candelabra day of the Rosebery Rocks races that our two heroes first met in Mrs. McDermott's back drawing-room in Sea View Place, the meeting arising in the following manner: Mr. Bunting had been duly aired out the back way in the hopes of satisfying him for the day, and inducing him to leave the coast clear for a "young friend who had come from their neighbourhood in the country to see the races." But Mr. Bunting having, quite unintentionally,—for he was on far too good terms with himself to think such a thing as a rival possible,—put the ladies into a flutter by dwelling rather too much on the announcement; making them think he knew more than he really did, "Mamma," who was a skilful general, thought it best to parry the point by accepting the double escort up to the course. So Mr. Bunting returned himself at 2·20, as the railway people say, just in time to see Mr. Goldspink fingering Miss Rosa's pretty pink and white tarlatan muslin dress, in a style of familiarity that he didn't altogether approve of.

"*Con*-found him, he's no boy," frowned our hero No. 2 in return for the "off-hand" sort of salute our hero No. 1 accorded him on the introduction; Mrs. McDermott having judiciously hinted to Jasper that the gentleman coming was merely a chance acquaintance, of whom they made a convenience.

"He's a cool hand," thought Jasper, conning the stranger's airified manner, and the at-home sort of way in which he lounged about the room. He did not seem to recognise Jasper's consequence at all.

"He's no beauty," thought Mr. Bunting, taking a complimentary glance at himself in the mirror as he passed onward through the front drawing-room to the window, from whence he emerged into the balcony and took an unconscious survey of the sea. He wondered who the deuce the fellow was. Hoped he didn't think of going with them. Yet still he seemed to stay. Would see if he could make it out.

* * * * * * * *

"Well, it's about time we were going," observed Mr. Bunting, returning and speaking as if he commanded the Crinoline.

"Is it!" replied Miss Rosa, rising and circling away to get on her finery—giving Mr. Bunting one of those assuring glances with which

a clever woman will hold half a dozen men in tow at a time. If an honest man, struggling with adversity, is a sight for the Gods, surely a pretty girl playing two youths off at once, is a sight worthy of society, and such is the delicacy we purpose setting before the reader. Mamma presently followed, feeling assured there would be no comparison of notes between the gentlemen during her absence.

So she closed the door upon them, and her light foot-fall was presently heard overhead. The two gentlemen then sat, surveying their feet and their hands, as if neither thought the other worth notice. Each however wished the other away.

"Been here long?" at length drawled Jack, thinking to sound Jasper.

"Just come," yawned Jasper, as if he was thoroughly tired of Jack.

"*Humph*" snorted Jack unused to such shortness, and this from a poacher too. He then sat looking at Jasper's double chin and dumpy legs, thinking what a beauty he would be at forty. Admiration Jack wondered who Jasper was—where he came from—what he meant by sitting there like a great bull-calf—how it was that he had never heard of him before. It was very singular. It really looked as if he meant to go to the races. In fact, Jack had no doubt he meant to go to the races. Then he recollected that Mamma mentioned their young friend had come to see the races. That would account for his coming, and Jack felt rather more amiably disposed towards him. Still he would like to know that he was not to be troubled with his company too long; a passing bore he might put up with, but a permanent one he couldn't endure. So Jack looked round about the room, and up to the ceiling, and then at his watch, as if for an idea, and at length poked the pertinent question.

"Stay long?" with an air of indifference.

"Don't know," replied Jasper, wondering what business it was of Mr. Bunting's.

"Long as it's agreeable p'raps," suggested Jack.

"Just so," responded Jasper.

"Nice place," observed Mr. Bunting after another pause.

"It is," assented Jasper, thinking it would be just as pleasant if Mr. Bunting was away. He then drew Miss Rosa's "Present from Roseberry Rocks" work-box towards him, and began tumbling, and fumbling, and mixing its contents.

"Impudent dog," thought Mr. Bunting, "*that box is mine*"—(Mr. Bunting had helped Rosa to wind the reels of blue and yellow silk that Jasper was now winnowing through his fat fingers). Jasper then touched the invisible spring in the lid, and taking out the little looking-glass, began examining his teeth, and his whiskers, and his stupid face generally.

Better have a bason and water thought Mr. Bunting, eyeing the operation; when to show that he was equally at home with himself,

he arose from his seat, and making for the mantel-piece mirror, proceeded to examine his whiskers, his collar, his watch ribbon tie, and his upper man generally. Miss Rosa's beautiful mother-of-pearl musical box being on the ledge, he then deliberately wound it up, and setting it a-going with the venerable Rory O'More, returned to the balcony, leaving Mr. Jasper in the enjoyment of the music, or the noise, whichever he considered it.

"Dash him, but he 's an impudent fellow that," thought Jasper, eyeing Jack's retreat, whereupon Jasper returned the little glass to its pink-wadded case, and heaping in the goods as if they were so many potatoes, placed the work-box in the position in which he had found it. He then threw himself listlessly in his chair to listen to the tunes he had so often heard before.

Ere the box had run down, the side door opened, and Miss Rosa sidled in, with the self-satisfied smile of a good "get up" on her countenance. In truth, she was expensively dressed, though whether the rich rustling lilac-coloured silk in which she was now enveloped was an improvement upon the pretty muslin in which our friends found her, is a question upon which ladies and gentlemen would most likely differ; ladies generally going for the gay and grand, gentlemen for the simple and becoming. However, there she was, and, as in duty bound, both gentlemen admired the dress exceedingly, praised the bonnet made of a gauze to match the silk, and envied the pretty pink roses within their propinquity to the fair face. And Miss received their compliments with a laudable balance of smiles that would have puzzled a chaperone of twenty years' standing to say which was the favorite. In the midst of their laudations, in came the keeper of the conscience, Mrs. Mamma, who, after surveying Rosa all round, and very round she was, and telling her she must be careful how she got into the carriage, proceeded to ring the bell for the vehicle. The compliments meanwhile passed into the old course.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THEY LOVE AND DRIVE AWAY.

Mrs. McDermott having chartered Joshua Buckletongue's newly done up cane-sided landaulet, so provokingly smart that it might be taken for a private one, which is just the very thing the hirers of job carriages generally wish to avoid, there was room for our beaux inside, and Mr. Bunting having handed and tucked the voluminous ladies in, proceeded to ensconce himself in front of Rosa, leaving Mr. Goldspink to follow and take up his position opposite Mamma. John Thomas, having then carefully closed the door on the bulging crinoline, mounted the box, taking good care of his stockings, and at his nod the driver, with his half dirty berlins, got his horse by the head and proceeded to cut away to the course. Off they went with a jerk that nearly sent the gentlemen's hats into the ladies' laps, and they were presently worming their way among the multifarious vehicles and flights of equestrians that enliven the drive at this the witching hour of day. Every body as usual was on the move, some on foot, some in carriages, bound for the course, some for the shops, others for a crawl along the shore, some for—they didn't know where.

The day as shown by the sea, however, was now undergoing a change. Instead of a smooth glassy surface, cold ruffling breezes flitted quickly over, and heavy rolling swells pressed onwards, breaking in great yawning lethargy waves against the shingly shore. The enterprising marine landsmen, whom no amount of bounty could coax into the navy, looked glum, passing monosyllabical words to each other, deprecatory of appearances, and then trying to tempt the unwary into their boats, under the delusion that it was "a fine day for a sail." And, when in reply they got a rebuff, they "blowed the races," and wondered what people could see in such work. "Nothing like leather" was not the motto for them.

Meanwhile our pleasant party jolted on, each thinking how much better it would be if there were only three. Mamma sat eyeing her competitive sons-in-law with a comfortable complacency, wondering which would be the happy ring-buyer—mentally placing Jasper's well-ascertained wealth against Mr. Bunting's superior manner and appearance. Still, if Bunting had the castle, and all Mrs. Trattles said, there was no saying which might be the man, and the more she thought about it the more undecided she was, and the greater dread she was in of

making a mistake. A woman generally thinks she gets the wrong one whichever it is. Mr. Bunting finding that he had a long way the lead of Mr. Jasper in the matter of small talk, plied away his poetry and his pleasantries, while Jasper leant moodily back eyeing the beauty, and feeling satisfied that his money would carry him through. Money was a grand thing he had always been told, and he fully believed it. Who *was* this Mr. Bunting, he should like to know. A mere idle dangler, he'd be bound to say. Just the sort of man for ladies to make a convenience of. And he looked at Bunting as if very little of his company would satisfy him.

A sudden turn to the left presently cut our turfites out of the quiet-going current of society, and brought the old horse to his bearings against the collar. The ascent of Mont Blanc then commenced. The dash of driving was over, and the toiling one-horse travellers had to undergo the humiliation of being passed at a trot by the "pair oss powers," while they in turn were eclipsed by Shadrac Absolam, the hook-nosed keeper of the Turkish Saloon and Oyster-rooms, who with a select party of cigar-smoking Israelites dashed past in a yellow

barouche-and-four with dirty merry-Andrew-looking post-boys, whipping, shouting, and spurring as if they were trying to catch an express train; *w-h-i-sh!* what a dust they raise as they go, and how

complacently the Jews loll with their great arms over the sides, like half-drunken sailors on a spree. The contortions of people unused to carriages are very amusing. Cutting a dash up-hill, however, is at the best a sorry performance—an attempt that had better be abandoned for more favourable ground. So thought the majority of our pleasure-seekers, and straining, and coaxing, and cracking, and quartering became more the order of the day than cantering. Even when the acclivity was accomplished, there was no room for the panting posters to recover their wind and make a run in, so cargo after cargo were deposited in a very sedate bathing-machine-like way. But if the horses lacked wind, the downs were well supplied, and angry fitful gusts now swept over the unprotected open, increasing in intensity with each fresh attempt. The wind soon began to tell. The Union Jack on our "Hic et ubique" friend, Mr. Baccoman's marine villa, as he called his tent, was the first to go floating and sweeping, and rising and sinking along the flat, followed by an applauding pack of boys, all anxious to aid its escape, until it caught itself against one of the white rails of the course. Scarcely was its capture effected than the blue and yellow flag on the Hambletonian and Diamond tent followed suit; next half the red pennon went off the Fox and Hounds' Pavilion; when old Boreas, as if angry at not effecting his full purpose, took the rotten canvass suddenly in the rear, and with a well-directed whisk, sent the whole concern flying in the air, leaving the jolly topers exposed in a sort of cage resembling the framework of a lady's Crinoline. People then saw the storm was something to care about, and forthwith there was a running to the pegs, and tightening of ropes, and shortening of sail, and hauling down of ensigns; while the rival owners of the two fattest boys under the sun, fraternised with their respective caravans, lest they should both be blown away together. Roar, blast, roar; went the wind, keen, sharp, and driving, silencing the drums and trumpets of the shows, retiring the troops, and sending the acrobats, Ethiopians, organ-grinders, monkey-masters, and Aunt Sally-men, here, there, and everywhere for shelter; while the card-sharpers, and thimble-riggers plied their games in out-of-the-way places, free from the noxious ken of the inquisitive police. Amid this aërial conflict, the carriages continued to set down in long-drawn file at the back of the Stand, and after a series of those little pitching stoppages and short progresses, that announce a near approach, the blue-armed hand of policemen at the door-handle at length arrested the further progress of our friends, and the clanging of the iron steps invited their descent. John Thomas then jumped down from the box, and holding his hat on with one hand, he assisted the descent of the Crinoline with the other.

As people always think there is more snow falls at their front-door than anywhere else, so the troublesome wind always seems to touch

our nobility more than any one else, and certainly on this occasion our fair friends had good cause to complain of the manner in which they were met at the Stand, and, with the aid of their hoops, nearly blown up into mid-air. But for the prompt vigilance of Mr. Bunting, who saw by other alighters what was likely to happen, there would have been inevitable discomposure of the rayment, but Mr. Bunting having very judiciously taken Miss Rosa's flounced parasol, kerchief, and bouquet ere she attempted to alight, he popped out of the carriage, leaving her with both hands at liberty to steer her voluminous dress, and then secured her on his arm as soon as her taper foot touched the ground, leaving Mr. Goldspink to perform the same good offices for Mamma. Mr. Bunting then pressed on through the passage-obstructing crowd, crying, "Make way, please!—make way!" with a wave of the hand, that as good as said, "Please look at me and my astonishing beauty!" And forthwith the hurrying, draught-sucked ladies took furtive glances over their shoulders to see who was coming, each aspiring belle inwardly fearing she was going to be eclipsed, while the miscellaneous assortment of men—all, however, alive to the charms of the fair—winked and nudged each other, declaring Rosa was a clipper, and wondering how it was that Admiration Jack always got hold of such pretty girls. Mamma and jolly Jasper quickly followed, benefiting by the sensation caused by Miss Rosa's appearance, and picking up the compliments lavished on her as she passed. How glad Mamma was that Privett Grove wanted painting!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RACES.

THE ascent of the gently rising staircase being presently accomplished, our friends ushered themselves into the conservatory-looking state room of the Stand, with the comfortable seven-and-sixpenny sort of feeling of independence that distinguishes public from private assemblies, and then proceeded to reconnoitre the scene. It was a spacious room, light, lofty, and gay, with a marvellous variety of bonnets; for, despite the "World of Fashion," and the other arbiters of taste, there was not the slightest similarity or affinity among them, some being in chip, some in crape, some in straw, some in silk, some in satin; some garnished with fruit, some with flowers, some with feathers, some with beads, some with fruit, flowers, feathers, and beads. So, as it is said that there are no two human faces alike, it may also be said there are no two bonnets alike. The dresses, too, were as various as the bonnets, with a laudable desire, however, to harmonise in colour, instead of heaping on all the extremes, which used at one time to distinguish the English ladies from the French. So much floricultural elegance being ill-calculated to resist the fury of the wind, the ground-reaching windows were kept down, and the graduated scale of race-seeing steps on the balcony outside were deserted. Ladies promenaded up and down the room, showing that, how various soever their dresses might be in texture or in colour, they were unanimous in being as much like bell-glasses in shape as possible. The promenaders

of course were the open or disengaged ones, those who had little affairs in hand congregating in groups under the protection of Mammas or married sisters, for the others to say of the lady "How pleased she seems," and of the gentleman "How silly he looks," the usual current compliments of the occasion.

And of all the gay comers, none attracted more attention than our fair friend Miss Rosa, not only on account of her generally admitted beauty (pretty but conceited was the qualified term), but now more than ever from her evidently having that greatest female luxury—two strings to her bow. Mr. Goldspink, nettled at the intrusion of the stranger, presently asserted his claims with the air of a man who has no idea of being thwarted in anything he fancies. So he pushed and forced himself past Mr. Bunting in a way that as good as said, What business have you poaching on my preserve? Miss Rosa, on her part, held the scales of preference very evenly; if she smiled on Mr. Goldspink, she presently looked sweet at Mr. Bunting, and no two ladies could agree upon which was likely to be the happy man—which get the blissful inaugural kiss.

But hark! a familiar voice at the white marble refreshment stand is exclaiming, "What! no Hermitage! no Malmsey! no Lachrymæ Christi! Why surely you don't call this a refreshment stall! Never saw such a place in my life!" The speaker thereupon Aunt Sallying a whole pyramid of pies with his gold-mounted riding whip as he spoke, then picking it up and chucking a half-crown at the fair custodian, he turned on his brass-spurred heel, and, swinging up the room, confronted the company. We need not say it was the voice of Mr. O'Diccy—O'Diccy got up in the brightest of hats and shineyest of braided blue coats, for he is now affecting the militaire, and seeing his pupil environed by the petticoats, an intercourse of which he did not altogether approve, having lost several good chances by their officious interference, he strolled up to see what was doing, claiming acquaintance with the rest of the party by dint of the familiarity with which he greeted our friend; for O'Diccy was not a shy man, and would address the Queen herself if Her Majesty came in his way. So he rattled and talked as if he was both hard and soft, and sharp and flat, and, producing his card of the races, was ready to back or bet, or lay or take, or do anything to lose money—seeming as if he would take it as a real favour if somebody would rob him.

And now's the time for doing so, for the wind-scattered notes of a bell outside seems to awaken both sharps and flats, causing a general move among the men, all anxious to avail themselves of the last chance of cheating each other. How the chorus rises as they recede, one vociferating "Young Belshazzar!" another shouting for "Sorceress," a third for "Flora Grey," a fourth for we don't catch what. So they go, yelling and elbowing and treading on each other's corns, to join the general flock in a sort of every-man-for-himself sort

of way. The room looks all the better for their absence, just as a flower-border looks better after the removal of the weeds. The ladies, like tulips, then get more room to expand their skirts and adjustable bustles, and sweep up and down with the peculiar dromedary sort of movement these singular encasements give them. Presently a shout outside attracts their attention and causes them to wheel to the still drawn-down windows, like a flock of sheep after the passing of a fox.

An unfortunate cur, with an old hat tied to its tail, is undergoing the attentions of the crowd and the police, who drive it from side to side, without letting it leave the course. As fast as it makes a dart at one point it is driven to another, and is thus battledored and shuttlecocked between them. At length it makes a vigorous dash at a young Cockney Highlander attired in all the magnificence of his clan, knocking the young Cheapside chieftain flat on his back, sending his eagle-plumed bonnet one way, his currant bun another, and himself a third, to the terror of his nurse, who fears that the name of Brown is extinct. Up she lifts the roaring kicking urchin, and bears him to the rear, where his cries are drowned by the boom of the drums, the clang of the cymbals, and the crashing announcements of the speaking trumpets; the proprietor of the pink-locked lady denouncing the sea-green haired nymph as a dyed imposter, the Berkshire giant keeper proclaiming the surpassing stature of his *protegé*, and the custodian of the Cornish dwarf being equally eloquent in praise of his pigmy.

In the midst of the hubbub up rides the mainspring—the motive power of the meeting—the renowned Tim Boldero himself, on a punchy black cob, forming with its rider a perfect series of semi-circles. Like all would-be sportsmen, Tim has got his extremities into breeches and boots, which he thinks is all that is required for the character, though one might put a penny roll in between his knee and the saddle. But Tim does not profess to be a jockey, only the ruler of jockeys, and his tadpole-like figure causes a sensation among the brotherhood, denoting that it is time to strip and prepare for the start. And now Sir Felix, having ridden as consequentially up the course as he can for the wind, followed by his crimson-coated, white-collared groom, alights, and is bowed obsequiously up into his pigeon-house of a Stand, and presently appears at the front, much in the manner of Punch prior to commencing his connubial differences with Judy.

"What's that old fool about?" asks Mr. O'Dicey, with a twirl of his moustache, adding, "he's always showing off somehow or other."

Mr. O'Dicey suspected that Sir Felix had marred a very promising plant of his, and hence his displeasure.

Another longer, more vehement peal of the bell now resounds, causing what the Frenchman called the nightcaps to be taken off the horses' heads, and their clothing swept over their long tails, showing little cheeseplate-looking saddles on their satiny backs. Meanwhile sundry heretofore extremely insignificant-looking little men, more like

Scarborough fly-boys than anything else, suddenly rise into consequence by taking off the dingy husks in which they are enveloped, and shining forth like so many butterflies. A perfect shoal of them burst forth all at once—red, green, yellow, blue, spots, stripes and all. Now General Boldero charges the phalanx as gallantly as an unsteady seat and a steady wind will allow, urging them into line; which no sooner does one reluctant horse accomplish, than another turns tail, and the exhortation has to be renewed. Then the false starters have to be accommodated with their recalls, and it is not until Tim's naturally rubicund face assumes a very mulberry-like hue, and he begins to talk about fining, that a simultaneous movement of elbows and legs urges unanimity, and at length sends the whole squadron scudding away. "They're off!" is the cry.

"W-h-i-s-h, blow, w-h-i-s-h," goes the wind, inflating the jockeys' jackets like pilot balloons, and looking as if an insidious gust would strip them off altogether. But the race must be run whatever the weather, and if one horse can't face the wind another can, and the tempest is all in favour of the one that can, thus verifying the old adage, "that it is an ill wind that blows nobody good." Besides, who would wish to disappoint the Honourable Society of betting men, now distributed all over the kingdom, to say nothing of the interesting collection of honesty that adorns Bride Lane, all on the *qui vive* for the telegraphic message that will enable them to proclaim themselves conjurors, or leave them to back out of their false prophecies the best way they can.

So away the horses straggle and struggle along the green sward, till at the sea turn the gale takes them in the rear, and blows them all together again, sending them along the brow of the distant hill in a cluster. With what a difference of feeling their progress is regarded by the roughs on the top of the Stand, and the fair dames down below—the former straining their eyes, or directing their "Dollonds" to detect the whereabouts of red jacket or blue, while the ladies look quietly about to see how the flirtations progress—wondering whether their Captain Locket or Mr. Honeybill are coming, and why Major Mew looks so shy. "Hats off!" is now the cry, and curly heads, and lank-haired heads, and bald heads, and half-bald heads, stand with upturned faces, while the horses sweep by like a whirlwind, arms going, heels working, leather breeches in convulsions, and the excited legs—men who bet thousands on a farthing capital—jump, and roar, and shout, and stamp, "I'll bet!" "I'll lay!" "I'll take!" A rush, a kit-cat of jockeys, and it's over! Two minutes and a-quarter have decided the fate of hundreds—perhaps thousands of pounds. And scarce has the judge posted the winner on his board, than the drums and trumpets of the shows and the booths raise a discordant din, as if in glorification of the winner, but in reality to get the gaping countrymen into the shows, the insides of which are never so good as the out.

But the race of the day is the one for the aforesaid candelabrum, classical in design, and costly in structure. It is now exhibited on the accustomed green-baized pedestal on the balcony in front of the Stand, and excites with its numerous branches for lights and ornamental centre basket as much admiration among the fair, as does its concomitant purse of one hundred sovereigns among the contenders for the prize. Mr. Chizeler, the Bermondsey Sausage-maker.—who runs in the name of Captain Howard de Hastings—Mr. Chizeler's grey horse, Dog's Meat, is the favourite for the race; but Mr. Somerville Douglas, *alias* Mr. Peter Brown, the Clerkenwell Pawnbroker's bay horse, Soothsayer, has numerous friends, and there have been sundry communications during the morning to see if they cannot accommodate matters, the difference between them being what Chizeler calls the *sovs*: the candelabrum apparently being taken little account of. There are, however, a good many other horses of which neither Dog's Meat nor Soothsayer may have got an accurate measure, among others one belonging to an Honourable Society, known by the name of the Forty Thieves, so that upon the whole there is the chance of a genuine race. And now, just as parties are reforming in the Stand, (some loving couples doubtless thinking how agreeable it would be if it was not for the tiresome races) Tim Boldero is again seen aggravating the black cob into a canter, emulating as he thinks any jockey of the day. At the sight of the little bustling beer-barrel-shaped man, the dark waves of humanity roll back on either side of the course, and presently there are a couple of lines of hats and bonnets ruled as straight as the lines in a copy book. What a concourse of heads! All so much alike outside, and yet so different within; according or not as they are furnished with brains. What a marvellous difference that little addition makes! And there is no saying which has them till you tap them and try.

But the race, the race is the thing; and now our friend Jasper inducts the fair Rosa into the mysteries of the winner, while Mr. O'Dicey twirls his spiral moustache, clanks his brass spur, and twists about, apparently anxious to be doing—"I'll bet a dozen kids with any body"—and knowing the influence of Mammas, he endeavours to propitiate our chaperone by offering to lay her five pair to one against the favourite, though the odds are not half that amount. But Mrs. McDermott who knows the signs of age is not deceived by Johnny's elaborate cosmetiqueing, fixatriccing, and getting up, (rivalling the exploits of that great lady-renovator, Madame Leverson) into believing that he is a suitable companion for a youth like Jasper, and she eyes Johnny with the suspicion peculiar to discrepancy. What if he should victimise Jasper!—Rob him before he is fledged!—The man must be looked to, thought she. But O'Dicey, who has been scanned pretty often, turns his back on the light, and puts the best face he can on his wrinkles. The saddling bell presently comes to his relief and puts an end to the inquisition.

And now all the gay butterflies are again on the wing, forming quite a collection for a naturalist, and as everybody understands horses, there is the usual criticism, and picking out of the winner. There is plenty of choice, what with true runners, and false runners, and waiters on true runners, and false-start makers, and so on—a baker's-dozen in all. The jackets are bright, and the leathers are spruce, save those of a little old fellow in a faded green silk, whose drab cords and gaiters draw down the gibes and jeers of the cynical as he passes complacently to the post. "Let them laugh as wins," thinks he, feeling his springing little horse under him as he goes. This, though a light bay, is what the legs call a dark horse, namely, one that they cannot get much information about, and the owner, Mr. Whistlecraft, the horse-breaker and coper, of Rotheram, is making the most of the opportunity—taking everybody in that he can.

And now the supercilious gentlemen in the leathers, close in upon their provincial-looking brother of the drabs, apparently ashamed of the intercourse, and after few preliminary false starts, carry him away in the midst of them. A good driving wind aids the endeavour, and sends them sweeping along to the turn of the course in a cluster. A volley of chalky dust then envelopes them and hides old Dingy's apparel from further observation.

And now the excitement begins to bubble and simmer, and presently boils up into the usual frenzy. Every mouth is a-gape for his neighbour's money—offering every species of bait.

What a life must be that of a leg! Always on the stretch! Always trying to take somebody in! A continual mill-horse-round of never-ceasing anxiety; one event over, another beginning. Two to one against the favourite of this year; twenty to one against that of the next. Out upon such work, say we! A man had better break stones in a workhouse-yard than attempt to get money by such means.

But our particular spasm is again at its height. The striding, taper-limbed horses are distending themselves in the distance, the cluster having this time assumed more the shape of a telescope. On they come, at a rattling pace, the tail lengthening as they near. "Hats off!" is again the cry, to which the men respond, and jump, and raise themselves on tip-toe, while the ladies below put their glasses complacently to their eyes and reconnoitre the scene. Now the excitement finds vent in noise. "The gray!" "The gray!" shout a dozen voices, as the conspicuous favourite appears well in front, his backers hoping to pocket the guineas. "*The bay! The bay! The bay!*" vociferates the deep-toned Whistlecraft, flagellating his brown top-boot as he eyes the little stealing bay shooting to the front,—and sure enough within a few yards of home the little horse gives some springing bounds, and pokes his nose in first. "*Hoo-ray!*" shouts the stentorian-lunged winner, turning abruptly on his heel, pushing and forcing his way through the crowd, in a way well calculated to

arouse the wrath of the losers. "Let's out! Let's out!" cries he, forcing one man one way, and another another, as he makes for the door. The brawny, macintoshed, Yorkshireman, then goes stamping down stairs, shaking the edifice with his step, leaving the late clamorous but now chap-fallen speculators to digest their disgust at their leisure. Whistle is off to see after the cash, and the beautiful candelabrum will presently adorn his gin palace at Rotheram. Nobbler, the trainer of the Forty Thieves, looks aghast!

And again the excitement of gambling galloping, is succeeded by a Babel-like outburst of musical instruments and clamour, in the midst of which rude Boreas, as if indignant at the idea of anybody making a noise but himself, suddenly arose and blew a most furious concentrated blast upon the offending line, knocking down the caravans and turning the tents inside out. Then Jupiter Pluvius, roused into action, rolled a dense leaden-like cloud over the firmament, and, without hint or notice of any sort, drew the string of his shower-bath, and let down such a torrent of rain as half drenched the fumblers ere they could unfurl their patent umbrellas or get their siphonias out of their cases. Heavens, what destruction a single minute made of the finery that now distinguishes the maid from the mistress! How the artificial flowers were drenched, the gay coquetry taken out of the feathers, and the cheap crinolines—the 1s. 11½*d.* worths—reduced to one-half their original dimensions. We wonder what our mob-capped grandmothers would say, if they could rise from their graves and see housemaids in hoops, and the other absurdities that recently drew down the just indignation of the worthy Recorder of Hull. They would indeed think the world had got a turn! This day, however, would avenge a good deal; and then the tantalising part of the thing was, that when the rain had ruined everything, it suddenly ceased, like the stage-storm of a theatre, and the sun started forth from behind a cloud, shedding a halo on the mischief, while a gorgeous rainbow arose inland, throwing a gay arch far into the sea. Meanwhile the ladies in the comfortable stand look complacently upon the wreck of finery outside, occasionally looking at the sky, and hoping it would be dry under foot for them. Carriages then begin to draw up, and the staircase is presently enlivened with looped dresses, vandyked petticoats, and Balmoral boots, all properly arranged for display. Our prudent Mamma, who never likes to stay late, presently applies Mr. Bunting to the utilitarian purpose she described him as encouraged for, namely, by asking him to go for the carriage, leaving Mr. O'Dicey an uncomfortable spectator of Miss Rosa's lovely blue eyes, revolving, as he thought, rather too often and too sweetly on Mr. Jasper.

"What a bore it will be," thought O'Dicey, eyeing her bewitching smile, "if she gets him away from me;" and he thereupon applied himself to Mamma, to find out how much longer they were going to stay at the Rocks. In the midst of this inquiry Mr. Bunting returned

to say the carriage was ready, and tendering his arm to Miss Rosa, he led her away in the order in which they arrived; and Mr. O'Dicey, having helped to tuck in Mamma, saw them drive off, each with a considerable misgiving of the other, each wishing the other were further. Then Mr. O'Dicey hopped gaily up stairs again, humming a tune, but in reality extremely uneasy in his mind. He wished that the ladies might not be too many for him. Having cast carelessly about among the now departing crowd, he presently mounted his seven-and-sixpence-a-sider, and cantered back to the Rocks, arriving about the same time as the last rivulet of rain.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ORDINARY.

However bad a day may be for anything else, it is never too bad for dining; and accordingly about half-past five the usual heterogeneous assemblage—roughs and smooths, half roughs and half smooths—of a race-ordinary began to congregate and obstruct the doorway and passages of the Flying Dutchman Hotel in Shark-street, being the sporting rendezvous that Mr. Boldero patronised, and where a gentleman could be accommodated with the odds, or anything else in the sporting way. To it came appetites in various degrees of vigour and ripeness, some that dined at one o'clock, others that dined at two; some that *could* put off till four, some that dined at sunset; others that dined whenever their owners could get a dinner. And again the confusion of tongues arose, "ar'll lay" this, "ar'll take" that: Yorkshire bellowing against Lancashire, Manchester pitting itself against Leeds. Each race was run over again, and the cause of defeat explained, including that of Nobbler on behalf of the Forty Thieves. And as the plot thickened, and people began to growl and talk about their stomachs, thinking their throats were cut, and so on, up drove Mr. O'Dicey in a smart Queen's coloured brougham—O'Dicey got up on the Shaksperian principle,

> "Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,"

velvet and silk, and chains and lockets, and puffy pink-tinted shirt, presenting a strange contrast to the coarse hard-featured herd by whom he was surrounded, from which, however, he quickly disentangled himself, and skipped up stairs to secure a becoming seat at the table. "Waitor!" exclaimed he, swinging hastily up the long room (two bed-rooms and a billiard-room laid together); "Waitor, where can I sit?" and the waiter (a retired gentleman's butler, whose

little "discrepancy" with his late master's plate caused by his too great love for the turf kept him out of place, thinking O'Diccy looked like a tip, put him second from the chair, next Sir Stephen Sappey, who of course was coming to support his brother Bart.: a place that O'Diccy immediately secured by placing his thin glazed card on the plate. He then confirmed the waiter's estimate of his quality by chucking him half-a-crown for himself.

Next, Sir Felix Flexible whipped up in his smart dress chariot, the cockaded coachman making as much fuss with his tightly curbed horses as he could, and seeming to think himself rather demeaned by having to drive up such a narrow greengroccerish sort of street. Reader, if you live in the country and value the peace of mind of your horses, never engage a town coachman—that is to say, a man who has driven in town. They think of nothing but hitting and bearing and cutting round corners. One of these elbow-squaring gentlemen will spoil the best tempered horse in a week, and declare he is vicious. If Mr. Rarey would teach them the real nature and character of the animal, it would be a great blessing to masters; only most of them are so self-sufficient that they will most likely say they have forgotten more than Rarey ever knew. As Sir Felix's coachman stops with a sudden jerk, the well-powdered footman rather ponders on the board, thinking perhaps "Charles" has made a mistake, and is only asking his way; but a "Now then!" over the aiguilletted shoulder, accompanied by the letting down of the carriage window, announces "all right," and "Jeames" jumps nimbly down to unfold the door-steps and exhibit the great man inside. Sir Felix then descends in due state, letting the assembled outsiders see the brightness of his hunt-club buttons and the glorious amplitude of his well starched white vest; and preceded by Tom Boozeyworth the landlord, and a flight of those rusty-coated waiters that turn up on all public occasions from no one knows where, explores the intricacies of the long low passage, amid cautions of "Mind, here's a step down, Sir Felix," and "there's a step up, Sir Felix," and "Mind your head, Sir Felix," until he reaches the creaking old stairs that lead up to the extemporised long room, where he finally lands amid a great display of white ware and sundry huge joints of beef and mutton, forming with cheese what the sailor described as all the delicacies of the season. If not very fine, however, it is substantial, and the ornamental centre basket of the prize candelabrum makes a grand plateau for the usual group of calves' feet jelly-glasses.

Sir Felix has hardly contemplated the room and the semicircular chair, from which he has to deliver his classical eloquence, ere Sir Stephen Sappey is borne in by the pushing, rushing crowd, all clamorous for places and anxious to be at the viands. Seeing the style of men, and feeling pretty sure that if one of them was to choose to occupy the chair, he would not perhaps get him out again, Sir Felix immediately

takes possession, his brother Baronet squats in the seat of honour on his right, Mr. O'Dicey seats himself on his left, and the thirty or forty sportsmen—or sporting men—composing the body of the party fall into place as best they may. An immediate onslaught commenced upon the food, and the joints and the pies and the potatoes were pulled and rolled and pushed about the table in a most promiscuous, every-man-for-himself, sort of way. Munch, crunch, munch, crunch, patter clatter, patter clatter, waiter, beer, spoon, salt, pepper, fork, knife, plate, are the only intelligible sounds that escape. Presently the less voracious of the appetites begin to be appeased, and as the noise somewhat subsides Mr. O'Dicey's voice is heard storming the waiters, and demanding all sorts of unheard-of and impossible things. First he wants some Gorgona anchovies, and is furious, or pretends to be, at not getting them. "What! no Gorgona anchovies! Never heard of such a thing! Where's the man of the house? Send the man of the house here!" But the man of the house is far too busy drawing old bottled sherry—rich, dry, and full of character—out of the cask to attend to any such summons, and our friend's wrath is diverted at the absence of French mustard for his cold beef; so sending his plate away he demands some plovers' eggs, then some Bombay mangoes, and last some Emmenthaler cheese, which latter is offered to him in the shape of a great leathery-looking slice of strong-smelling Cheshire. Scorning the substitute, he sends his plate away, and balancing himself on the hind legs of a somewhat ricketty rush-bottomed chair, proceeds to twirl his moustache and contemplate the company. There are a good many fellows there that he knows, legs, levanters, and lame ducks of all sorts, but none that he cares particularly about. If they can blow him, he can return the compliment and the reciprocity system is well understood among them. So amid the process of identifying faces, now seen without their familiar hats, the last sounds of mastication gradually die out, and a short grace is now listened to that was not waited for at the opening. Plates, bread, sweepings generally, disappear; and two long lines of variously-shaped wine-glasses range from end to end of the narrow table, guarding, as it were, sundry pyramids of very teeth-trying biscuits, placed on the well-known old green-coloured dessert plates. Mr. Boozeyworth then furnishes material for the coming conviviality by placing "ports and sherries" at either end of the table, while his coadjutors take orders for rum, gin, hollands, brandy, whatever the parties prefer to wine. These in their various forms of hot with and cold without, cold with and hot without, being at length distributed according to each man's behest, and an approving sip taken, eyes began gradually to turn towards the chair, and Sir Felix, after a good prefatory "Hem!" arose and calling for a bumper-toast, gave "the health of Her Majesty the Queen" in a very laudatory, word-dwelling manner; after which he complimented the Prince Consort, the Prince of Wales, and the rest of

the Royal family, in a similar strain, and again resumed his seat, feeling pretty comfortable as to voice, provided he could bring out the book-learning when he wanted it. After a proper pause he again rose, and gave "the Army and Navy" in highly eulogistic terms, when, true to his morning spurs, and greatly to the surprise of Sir Felix, up jumped Mr. O'Dicey to return thanks on behalf of the army. A buzz of applause welcomed the change of voice, and assured our not over-diffident friend of a favourable reception.

"Sir Felix Flexible, Sir Stephen Suppey, and gentlemen," said he, looking down the table, "I thank you most cordially for the compliments you have paid that branch of the service to which I had the honour to belong. (O'Dicey had been turned out of the Fandango Huzzars for turning up the King too often at *carté*.) I need not say, gentlemen, that under all times, all climes, all circumstances, the army will ever be found true to those illustrious antecedents that have procured us honour abroad, and comfort and tranquillity at home. (Applause.) Gentlemen, I agree with my Lord Palmerston, that a foreign foe would bitterly rue the day he ever set his presumptuous foot on our shores, for the country would rise to a man, and show that we are as great in the strength of war as we are in milder pursuits of peace. (Renewed applause, during which the grog-drinkers took courage out of the varied contents of their glasses, and felt very brave.) And let me observe, gentlemen," continued Mr. O'Dicey, addressing himself to the legs, "that these race-meetings are intimately connected with the best interests of the army, fostering and encouraging that unrivalled breed of horses for which our glorious country has so long been justly famous. (Applause.) I need not observe to this meeting, presided over by a gentleman of the high classical knowledge and acquirements of the worthy Baronet, that in all times, and all ages, the improvement of its breed of horses has been an object of care and solicitude to every paternal government."

"Very true! very true!" assented Sir Felix, tickled by the compliment paid to himself, which he did not expect from our friend.

"We know," continued Mr. O'Dicey, twirling his moustache, "We know how all-absorbing were the Olympic games, and that racing was considered in Greece a matter of the highest national importance."

"Holloa!" muttered Sir Felix, pricking his ears.

"We can almost realise the glorious spectacle of Philip of Macedon, and Hicro, King of Cyracuse, contending in person for the prize." ("The deuce!" exclaimed the Baronet, starting up in his seat). "And to come nearer home," continued Mr. O'Dicey, taking a sip of his sloe juice port wine, "history tells us how in the ninth century, Hugh Capet sent a present of race horses to Athelstane." "Oh, the deuce!" groaned the Baronet, sinking back in despair, and covering his face with his kerchief, in which position he had the mortification to hear Mr. O'Dicey run glibly through the very speech he had taken such pains

to prepare for himself, and finish with a well-rounded eulogium on the Turf, which drew forth the general applause of the company.

Mr. O'Dicey having resumed his seat, then presently arose, and sweeping his wine-glasses on to the floor with his brown dress-coat tails, swung carelessly out of the room—chuckling at having paid the old boy (as he called Sir Felix) off for his former interference. He then ordered a fly, and drove away to tell his friend Curlew, who lived in the adjoining rooms to the Baronet in the too thinly-walled Minerva mansion, how he had stolen the speech they had jointly heard Sir Felix concocting, and anticipated its delivery at the ordinary. O'Dicey also recounted his own observations on the race-course; how Miss Rosa had looked sweet on young Fatty, as they called Jasper, and Mamma rather sour on himself; and being presently joined by their confederate, Mr. Wanless, whose acquaintance the reader will pre-

sently make, they resolved themselves into a committee of management, to consider what was best to be done under the circumstances. Meanwhile Sir Felix floundered on as best he could with the court card taken out of his hand, and when, after speech, song, and sentiment, subscription to this, that, and t'other, Mr. Boozeyworth again steered him down stairs, and along the dark intricate passage; "A step down here, Sir Felix," "A step up here, Sir Felix," "Mind your head, Sir Felix," he felt he had been made a tool of, and resolved that he wouldn't be caught that way again. And so he drove home in the dumps, and when he awoke the next morning, with a dry tongue and feverish head, instead of pleasant applause and tinkling of spoons in the toddy-glasses, he was very ill-pleased to find that, one way and another, he had been let in for some five-and-twenty pounds. While Sir Felix was acquiring all these *desagrémens*, O'Dicey and Co. were settling their course of procedure towards our friend Mr. Jasper.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A BATCH OF GOOD FELLOWS.

"Come and have a quiet chop with me at Chousey's," said Mr. O'Dicey in his usual off-hand way, as he met our plump hero strolling moodily along the north shore—hands deep in peg-top trouser pockets—chewing the cud of a conversation he had just had with Miss Rosa, in which he thought she had been rather more affable to Bunting than there was any occasion for. This was shortly after the consultation we described in our last chapter, during which time O'Dicey had had ample time for making arrangements, as well for the entertainment as for securing the company of a few of those choice spirits by whom a "pluck" is best effected. The invitation was opportune, for Jasper was out of humour with Miss Rosa for encouraging that grinning simpleton, with his flourishing airs and poetical nonsense, and knew that dining with O'Dicey would annoy both her and Mamma, so he immediately closed with the offer, and inquired about the hour.

"What time?" asked he, with a smile of satisfaction.

"Oh, any time,—six, half-past; seven if you like; but seven punc. mind, if it is seven."

"O six would suit me best," replied Jasper, unused to such fashionable hours. (Four was their hour in the country.)

"Six be it, then," replied Mr. O'Dicey, "Six be it; and I'll see if I can get two or three good fellows to meet you. Just a chop you know—no dressing—no dressing—come as you are—come as you are." So saying, he waved an adieu with his clean primrose-colour kid-gloved hand, and went swinging away in quest of his comrogues.

It so happened that there were a good many queer fellows down at the Rocks at this particular time; indeed there generally are at all race-meetings; and though the sports of the turf were over for the present, the vultures availed themselves of the short interregnum before the commencement of the Scrambleford meeting to indulge in a little bodily ablution, and pick up such stray birds as came in their way at billiards, cards, dice, or what not. An accomplished "leg" can play at anything, or find those who can. Mr. O'Dicey's dining rule being not more than the eight nor less than the six, he very soon picked up as many guests as filled the round table of the Dolphin dining-room. As it is always a convenience to know something of those we are going to meet before they arrive, we will here introduce them to the reader, instead of leading them up as they come. The stuttering Major Minster claims precedence in point of age, and was a long-faced, straight-haired, blue-eyed, stoutish, middle-aged, clean-shaven, blue-surtouted, pepper-and-salt-trowsered man, who talked *aide-de-camp*-ship, and affected such a horror for gaming and all youthful indiscretions, that a fond mother would think he was just the sort of man she would like to send a darling son abroad with. The Major was cautious and considerate; always paused before he stuttered his answer; and gave disparaging opinions in such a guarded sort of way, that they carried far more weight than downright denunciations would have done. He was a capital hand at both billiards and cards, but having had the misfortune to be found out, people had got shy of him; and not having the wherewithal to set up for himself, had become a sort of hanger-on of O'Dicey's, to whom the Major's steady demure looks and respectable conversation were a great advantage and accommodation.

Curlew, the before-mentioned Ginger Curlew, was a very little man, with a whipped-spaniel sort of look about him that told sadly against him at first; but he was a bold, bad little fellow, who if he made a set at a man, would follow him to the Land's End, before he would let him go unamerced. His *rôle* was Parliament. "When oi was in Parliament," for he always took care to trot out his short parliamentary career, just as Mr. Handeycock trots out Peter Simple's grandfather, Lord Privilege, —when he thinks there is anything to be made by the display. Curlew's investment for a seat had not been a bad one, for "Thos. Curlew, Esq., M.P." appears on all books, papers, and writings, belonging to him; thus giving his comrogues an opportunity of thinking he is still a senator instead of something else beginning with an S, a title that would not be quite so useful in aiding his plucking endeavours.

The next gentleman we have the honour of introducing to the reader is the well-known Captain Arthur Gammon, who goes on the false tack principle too, namely, that of keeping hounds, thus usurping the credit of the Gammon who does. His flash talk is about hunting,

> "Horses and hounds and the system of kennel,
> Leicestershire nags and the hounds of old Meynell."

And very well he does it. He is always wanting a huntsman or whip, or a horse "to carry one of my men." In person he is a sort of O'Dicey double, but younger, having all his great original's impudence without his tact. Gammon had the misfortune to begin life by thinking he could do O'Dicey, and bitterly he paid for his temerity. O'Dicey plucked him as clean as a poulterer plucks a pullet, and then converted him into a sort of second fiddle, setting him to aid his arrangements and do his bidding on all occasions. Like O'Dicey, Gammon goes for the clothes, flash, shiny, and glittering, seldom appearing two days alike. He is a smart well set up little man, with a good curly head of dark clustering hair, bright eyes, and good features generally; which, with his careful costume and consummate assurance, served him in good stead at first, and got him into several good country houses, from which he was often as difficult to eject as the celebrated Soapey Sponge himself. Having once effected a *logement* in a certain nobleman's house, where he seemed well inclined to stay on for ever, various expedients, such as packing up his portmanteau and presenting him with the key at breakfast, asking him where he wished to have his letters directed to, and so on, were resorted to for the purpose of ousting him without success. At length it was thought advisable to take soundings as to how long he meant to stay, so the project of some future excursion was brought upon the tapis during dinner, and Captain Gammon was urgently appealed to to form one of the party. "Hay—haw—hum," replied he, fingering his tie; "hay—haw—hum," paying the same compliment to his trinkets, "fear I must be off before then—been here almost a fortnight as it is."

"Sir," interposed the pompous butler, who was "drying" or "sweeting" the company—"Sir, you will have been here *three weeks* to-morrow."

So much for the Captain, who may now pass on for the present.

Now for Mr. Wanless, the gentleman who formed one of the council of war at the Minerva Mansion. Joe, as they call him, is a queer fellow, and he looks like one. He calls himself a monetary discount and general commission agent, which may mean anything. He is a sedate, bald-headed, middle aged man, whose otherwise quiet appearance is marred by a watchful restlessness of eye, as if he lived in constant expectations of a kick. His conversation is generally about lords and great people whose bills he has manipulated (perhaps stolen); but a man might talk to Joe for a month without being able to come to any conclusion as to what he really is, so mixed and miscellaneous is his matter—now about politics, now about prices, now about farming, now about shooting, and anon about fox-hunting. His is the finishing department—his the delicate duty of opportunely producing the little bill-stamp that enables parties to square accounts at the moment, on the principle that Joe always enforces, of short reckonings making long friends. Joe's next business is to trot off into the City to get the bill

"done." Such were the parties to the plant on our fat friend; and O'Dicey, well knowing where to find them—the Major at Slowman's reading-room, Curlew at Sidepocket's billiard-table, Gammon at Spurrier the saddler's, and Joe at the railway station—he gave each a monosyllabical summons for six, and proceeded on his way rejoicing. He would steal a march on mother and daughter (meaning our fair friend and Mamma) if he could. He then looked in at Chousey's to give the finishing touch to the programme of the entertainment.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. O'DICEY'S DINNER.

Although Mr. O'Dicey talked of a mutton chop—a quiet chop, it was only a pleasant figurative sort of way he had of speaking of as good a dinner as money can procure, and Mr. Chousey's instructions were to send up the best entertainment the house could afford. So long as a man played, Mr. O'Dicey said he was unwise to deny himself anything, for it was only to increase the stakes a little and have it all back. Whatever O'Dicey did, therefore, he did in the most liberal manner, trusting to other people paying for it. Accordingly a first-class dinner was ordered in the best room at the Dolphin, the waiters were beshorted and bebuckled, and the prime vintages brought up from the *cave*. Nothing was omitted that could add to the bill, and though the dinner might cost three times as much as it would in a private house, we should like to know the private house where you could get such a one at such short notice. As of course it would not do for O'Dicey to be fussy or figetty about it, he was not there to receive our friend, who arrived a few minutes before six; and when "Mr. Goldspink" was ushered into the Dolphin—a room radiant with mirrors, and shining with French polish, and cut crimson velvet furniture—he found the exemplary Major admiring a number of the Turner collection of engravings, while Joe was raking the sea through a standard telescope, looking at this ship and that, as though he expected a cargo of something coming in. They both desisted from their avocations as Jasper entered, and received him with an obsequious civility that was extremely flattering to our friend. They apologised for the absence of their host. "Dare say'd Mr. Goldspink knew O'Dicey as well as they did—excellent fellow, but anything but punctual; however, it wasn't quite time yet, so they wouldn't say anything," and proceeded to discuss the sea, and the weather, and the state of the country, courting and encouraging our young friend's opinion instead of laying down the law in the dictatorial tone of some of the elders.

So they roved gaily from subject to subject, until Jasper landed them on the Roseberry Rocks race-course, when, just as he was explaining how it was that the Forty Thieves had been so unsuccessful at the recent meeting, the door flew open, and in bounced Mr. O'Dicey, flourishing a highly-scented cambric kerchief, curled, dressed, and jewelled, as if he were going to a ball. "Ah, my dear fellow!" exclaimed he, seizing Jasper's fat hand; "Ah, my dear fellow! I beg you ten thousand pardons for not being here to receive and introduce you; but better late than never," added he, patting Jasper familiarly on the back. "This," continued he, bringing forward the model Major by the arm, "is my excellent friend Major Minster, late *aide-de-camp* to Lord Strutandstride; and this," continued he, doing the same by Joe, "is my good friend Mr. Wanless—Mr. Joseph Wanless; two gentlemen, let me say, whom the more you know the more you'll like, than which no higher compliment can be paid to any one;" whereupon they all went through the form of grinning, and scraping, and bowing, without which the acquaintance would have been incomplete. Mr. O'Dicey then compressed his gibus hat, and chucking it in a corner, proceeded to reconnoitre the round table. The dinner, of course, was to be *à la Russe*, that convenient invention for serving *réchauffers;* and there was a splendid vine-wreath-pillared "A. B. Savory" epergne, full of cut flowers in the centre, with transparent Wenham-lake ice in the four richly cut glass side-dishes. The table linen was immaculately white, and the pyramidical napkins stood like sentries over the clear crystal. All things looked promising and well. Just as Mr. O'Dicey had completed a hasty survey, the door opened, and little Curlew came sneaking in after his waiter-announced name, and having been presented to Jasper, was formally introduced to the other two gentlemen, as though they had never had the pleasure of seeing each other before. Ere he had got much advanced with his ingratiation, in flung Captain Arthur Gammon, quite in the O'Dicey style, scented, jewelled, and varnished, like his great prototype. After shaking hands with his host, nodding to Joe, and "old-boying" the Major, he made a passing bow to our hero, in return for Mr. O'Dicey's introduction of "My friend Mr. Goldspink," and then proceeded to reconnoitre himself in the mirror. First he frizzed up his dark curly hair, then he twitted his luxuriant whiskers, next he examined his teeth, and then encouraged his collar.

"Come, you'll do old boy," said O'Dicey, digging his double in the ribbs with his thumb as he passed to the bell knob, which scarcely responded to his touch ere the door opened, and in poured the servants, bearing the banquet.

A first-class hotel dinner is by no means a bad thing—barring the payment; a second-class one is to deprecated, and a third avoided. Still, save at Richmond or Greenwich, an hotel dinner, though far more expensive, is never half so much appreciated as one at a private house;

just as people consider a ball given at Willis's Rooms is no equivalent for their hostesses not turning their houses inside out to receive them at home. Chousey knew how to do the thing, both in the way of catering and charging, and there was no exception to be taken to anything here. There was turtle soup, both clear and thick, Severn salmon, Torbay soles, and a variety of other fish, all hot and prime of their kind. Chousey's wine, too, was good, and his decanters holding surprisingly little, and three-quarters emptied bottles, being invariably whipped away, for fear of any little sediment at the bottom, an apparently great consumption caused very little headache. Abstemiousness is one of the hardships of a gambler's life, who must always have his keenest wits about him ready for action; and Mr. O'Dicey, though always calling for wine, and sipping, and tasting, and eyeing and urging his friends to generous potations, in reality drank very little himself. Joe and the Major, who were generally on short commons, and only the out-riggers, or heavy fathers, of the entertainment, made up for their host's deficiency, and ate and drank, and ate and drank, with the most laudable sea-side appetites.

"Venzon coming, sir," whispered Mr. Chousey in Joe's ear, as he was going to have a second *côtelette de veau*.

"Venzon is there!" replied he, pausing to consider.

"Yez-ir—venzon from the Earl of Blazington's—best park in England," replied the landlord.

Our landlord was right. There *was* venison; not from Lord Blazington's, but from the Duke of Tergiversations, the migratory haunch having at length found a resting-place at Chousey's, who had given Mrs. Trattles a couple of dozen of fine pale sherry (out of the cask), for the same. It was now in what Chousey called high order, so high, indeed, that if Captain Gammon had not been under recognisances, in the shape of a long-standing bill, to keep his peace, Chousey would have preferred having it carved at the other end of the room. As it was, however, he ventured it at the side table, and by helping Mr. Wanless first, and deluging his plate with sweet sauce, he got him to utter the approving "capital," so essential to the prosperity of a haunch, and which set all the other eaters anxious for their turns. Gobble, gobble, gobble, was presently the order of the day, broken by occasional demands for the jelly or the French beans. The best test of their sincerity was that, after being refreshed by a round of Bordeaux, they all got hot plates and went in for more venison. So the travelled haunch came to good account at last.

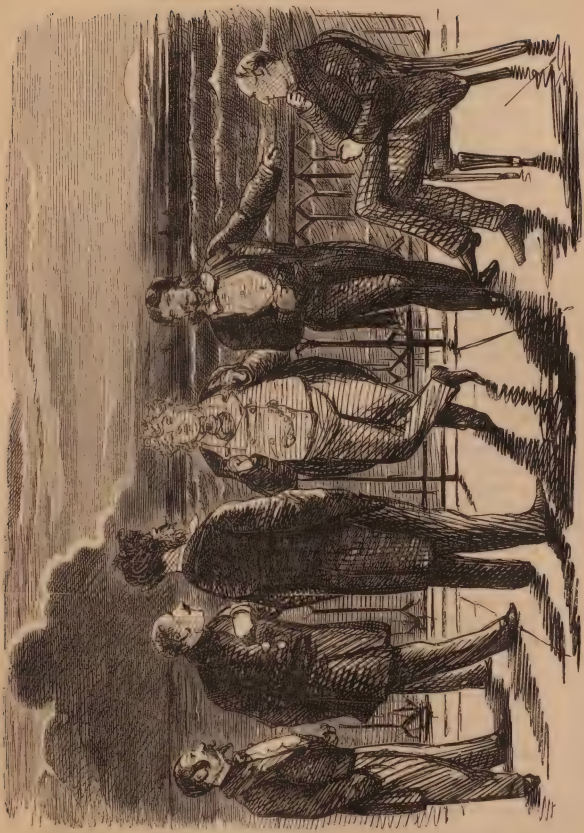
Turtle and venison are very convincing, and sweets and savouries are of little account after. The Bordeaux, and the Johannesberger, and the Steinberger, and the sparkling, and the old dry Sillery, and the creaming champagnes, presently did duty for the viands, and host and guests discarding the non-health drinking system, were extremely attentive to our hero; so attentive, indeed, that he was more than

ever convinced that he was "somebody." At length, the lobster salad, and the ice-pudding, and the jellies, and the creams, and the fritters, of this mutton-chop dinner, began to be passed or hastily rejected, each man feeling as though he would never be hungry again, and some nice fresh parmesan cheese was introduced, to give zest to a glass of Clos Vougeot. This latter was introduced on its side, in the cosey cradle, with all the pomp and circumstance peculiar to Babies and Burgundy, the well-stained cork carefully extracted amidst observations on the capricious character of the wine, and hopes that the bottle would prove good. And very good it was, though O'Dicey would have had up a dozen ere he would have been foiled in his object. Finger-glasses were then placed on the table; splashing, and dabbling, and drying becoming general; after which a short grace was said by the host, and, amidst a flourish of napkins, and shaking of legs, an adjournment was moved to the window, while the waiters cleared away the things. The ground-reaching windows were then partially opened, and our now-flushed friends poured out to enjoy the fresh air of the balcony.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A QUIET INNOCENT EVENING.

It was a splendid autumnal evening; the sky was red, and the last rays of the setting sun danced merrily on the sea, lighting up the white-sailed pleasure boats, and drawing the accustomed comet-gazers out of their respective houses. The broad brick footway past the hotel resounded with light footsteps and light voices, and light laughs unchecked by the coming of the gas-light man, whose presence is generally so suggestive of retirement in other places. Presently the long line of sea-board glistened with lights, looking like a beautiful necklace of brilliants. Day and night then contended a while for the mastery, until a thin transparent gauze of mist began to descend, turning the scale in favour of night. Still the gay promenaders kept on their routes, the tribe of Spanish hats and floating dresses swelling rather than decreasing. Glow-worm-like young gentlemen in various habiliments presently joined them, whiffing and smoking as they walked, the ladies all declaring they liked the smell of cigars out of doors. Meanwhile our well-fed friends lolled and lounged in the balcony ere they returned to the enjoyment of the fruit and the wine. The Major, who was full of sentiment and enthusiasm, pointed out the beauties of the sunset and the scene generally, expatiating on the melancholy feeling engendered by the declining year, while Gammon, perked up, declaring it was the very thing he liked, as it would



enable him to begin cub-hunting almost immediately. And Jasper, wh had some very unpleasant associations connected with the chase, looked with astonishment at a man who could anticipate pleasure from such rude bumpings and boundings. Little Curlew, too, began to give tongue initiatory of his parliamentary career; but O'Dicey presently recalled them to their allegiance at the table, now decorated with a splendid dessert and a magnum of Claret. A thin water-biscuit being voted a much better accompaniment to wine than fruit, the pine and grapes and peaches were discarded, while the ruby wine circulated briskly in the large thin glasses with which the table was plentifully supplied.

"Very good," observed Mr. Wanless, smacking his lips as, after draining his glass, he sat in judgment on the last mouthful. "Very good," repeated he, replacing the glass on the table.

"It is," assented the Major, who had discussed his wine more leisurely.

And that being the general opinion, Mr. O'Dicey presently filled again on a liberal heel-tap, and sent the wine out on a second excursion. Twice round, with liberal helpings, makes a good hole in an inn Magnum; and when the three-quarters-emptied jug again stopped before our host, he just drew the bell-string, and pointing to it with his knife as the quick-sighted waiter entered, ordered candles and an anchovy toast.

The waiter presently returned with the wine and the candles, and the stuttering Major having begged for a reprieve of the twilight as the man was going to close in the shutters, they continued sitting in the mixed light of inside and out. The wine criticism being over, the guests presently accommodated themselves in their chairs, each man sitting or lolling according to his liking, and conversation became general, the Major leading off with regrets at the shortening days, while Captain Gammon was all for the turkey carpet, warm red curtains, with the horse-shoe table before the wood and coal fire. Summer or winter was then the thesis, each man offering his opinion and arguments on the point; in the midst of which the anchovy toast came, and O'Dicey gave another tap at the Claret jug with his dessert-knife.

"Ne—ne—no—more," stuttered the Major, rising and rubbing his lips with his napkin as if he was done. "Ne—ne—no—more *for me*," repeated he, with an emphasis.

"O fiddle!" replied O'Dicey. "Do as you like, you know, only sit still and let's have a little quiet chat. De'ssay you've got no place to go to."

"Why, ye—ye—yes I have. I was go—go—going half-price to the p—p—play."

"Go to-morrow night," replied O'Dicey, pulling him down by the coat-tails. "Go to-morrow night, and I 'll go with you."

With which assurance the Major resumed his seat and helped himself to a little more wine. The others did not evince any disinclination to a sit; and though the wine was sourer than our friend Jasper was accustomed to, yet he took O'Dicey's assurance that good claret never did anybody any harm, and helped himself in his turn. So the circulation proceeded amidst longer or shorter stops according to the inclination of the party before whom the bottle was. At length even Wanless began to pass it, whereupon O'Dicey rung the bell, observing that they would have coffee and a rubber at whist.

"Ne—ne—no c—c—cards," interposed the Major, reddening; "ne—ne—no cards. I must inter—di—di—dict ca—ca—cards altogether."

"Well, then, I'll play you a game at chess," replied the tractable O'Dicey.

"So be it," assented the Major, equally affable.

Coffee presently came, and while it and the *etceteras* were circulating, the waiters cleared away the wine and dessert, and brought in the chess-board. As luck would have it, it contained a pack of cards, which Curlew immediately pocketed; and having seen the Major and O'Dicey apparently deeply absorbed in their game, he invited Mr. Wanless to *écarté*, at a convenient table placed immediately behind the Major.

"He'll never notice us," whispered Curlew, with a knowing chuck of the head. And forthwith the two sat down and began to play. Captain Gammon looking on and backing Wanless, who had very much the best of it, so much so, indeed, that Jasper gladly closed with Gammon's offer to go halves in his bets. And the more Curlew frowned and growled, and bit his lips, the more luck seemed to go against him. The two games then proceeded noiselessly together.

At length the Major, by a most masterly manœuvre, completely overcame his antagonist at chess, and rising triumphantly from his chair, seemed to awake to the reality of there being other people in the room.

"Holloa!" exclaimed he, looking wildly round. "Holloa, cards! When did they come in?"

Just then Wanless again turned up the king, when Curlew dashed down his cards with an oath, declaring he was never so out of luck in his life.

"Well, my dear fellow, you would play," said Wanless, consoling him.

"Would play?" growled Curlew, diving into his pocket for his purse. "I did it as much to oblige you as anything else."

"Then oblige me by handing me over three sovs.," observed Mr. Wanless, dryly.

"And me three," added Gammon, holding out his hand for the money.

"What!" exclaimed the astonished Major, "have you been playing for mo—mo—money?"

"Money, ay, to be sure. What do you suppose we play for?" asked Wanless.

"Why, I thought we were to have a quiet, innocent evening. O'Dicey and I have been playing for love."

"Ah, you look like a man for that sort of game," retorted Gammon. "Suppose you take a turn now at the other thing."

"Not I," responded the Major, firmly.

While this was going on, little Curlew handed Gammon his three sovereigns, who, in dividing them with Jasper, proposed tossing up for the half one. This being agreed to, Gammon covered a sovereign in the palm of his hand, and Jasper crying heads it came heads, and our friend pocketed the two sovereigns with great gusto. "Not a bad evening's work," thought he. "A good dinner and a couple of sovereigns for eating it."

The orthodox Major then looked at his watch as if he were going away, but little Curlew crying out for his revenge, Mr. Wanless gallantly took up the gauntlet, and changing seats prepared to give him it. The stakes were doubled and the betting increased: but luck went against the little man, and when at the end of half-an-hour he came to settle his losses, his smart gold-spangled blue purse seemed likely to be entirely denuded of its contents. Jasper still going halves with the Captain, came in for three more sovereigns as his share of the venture, and now felt as if he had got into the real unmistakeable way of making money. The exchange of sovereigns and nice crisp Bank of England notes is far more conducive to play than counters or I. O. U's., which may mean anything or nothing. So all parties thus became excited, and even the Major showed a disposition to nibble. He no longer "inter—di—di—dicted cards," but hovered about the table like a moth flickering at a candle.

It was not, however, until after the waiters had come jingling in with jugs, tumblers, and spoons, and the black bottles of courage, that he took any decided part in the play, and then he appeared to do it more for the sake of conformity than from any desire to win money. Sherry-and-water, and brandy-and-water, and gin-and-water have a very stimulating influence; and O'Dicey, having plied our friend Jasper with a good tumbler of strong eau de vie, stopped the tell-tale clock on the mantelpiece, and the real business of the evening then commenced. Play rose rapidly. It is just as easy to say two as one, a thousand as a hundred, and the point was to carry our young friend quickly forward on the wings of excitement. *Écarté* was still the game, fresh players going in every now and then, O'Dicey amongst the number, who quickly turned the heretofore winning game against our friend, and was succeeded by Captain Gammon, who promised to retrieve their waning fortune if Jasper would back him on the mutual risk principle as before. Back him he did, but very ineffectually, for he lost three games in succession. Things began to look rather ominous.

The non-playing Major then, drawing Jasper quietly aside by the arm as if to replenish their glasses at the tray, volunteered his advice to go on the doubling principle till he got a turn of lu—lu—luck in his favour, assuring him that it "must co—co—come at last." That he never knew a bold player lose, it was "o—o—only those who took fright at the fi—fi—figures and didn't give themselves fair play who lo—lo—lost." And though Jasper did not like the appearance of things, yet the Major was so kind and paternal that he could not help following his advice, and going boldly in, of course, made matters a great deal worse.

At length a waiter entered, bearing a savory grill and other provocatives of thirst, whereupon a truce was called for, and the parties gathered round the table eating and drinking, and talking about what they owed one another. The amount had become serious, so quickly do figures mount up, and Jasper and Gammon owed one party and another several hundred pounds. That, however, was nothing compared to what Mr. O'Dicey understood Jasper was equal to, and not expecting to have the pleasure of seeing him again, he determined to make the most of the present opportunity. The blood of all parties seemed to be roused, and even Jasper was anxious to retrieve his position. Cards, however, being slow for the concluding operation of fleecing, dice began to rattle, introduced by nobody knew who, and not objected to by anyone.

First little Curlew was seen shaking his elbow—fun, just for fun—and having satisfied his innocent curiosity as to whether he could throw doublets twice out of thrice or not, he cast away the box, when the great master himself took it up, and seating himself at the green-baize table, adjusted the moderateur lamp to his liking, and proceeded to back himself in. The well trained confederates then plied their respective parts; now joyous at winning, now stamping at losing, until after repeated rattle, rattle, rattle and bangs of the box on the table, Mr. O'Dicey thought he had drawn Jasper as fine as was prudent, and throwing down the box, swung carelessly away to the grill, telling our friend to take his seat and try his luck with the bones. But the prudent Major here interposed. "It was l—l—late. Did anybody know what o'clock it was?" producing his watch with well-feigned astonishment, and showing that it wanted twenty minutes to two.

"Rot the time!" exclaimed O'Dicey, helping himself to seltzer water on the faintest possible imputation of brandy. "Rot the time!"

> "Day was made for vulgar souls,
> Night, my boys, for you and I."

But Captain Gammon, too, got nervous, and drawing our hero aside, whispered confidentially in his ear, that he didn't like the looks of the thing, that luck was evidently against them, and they had better desist for the present and begin fresh another night.

"Well," said our heated and confused hero, considering how they were to settle matters then.

"Come along! Come!" cried Mr. O'Dicey, peremptorily, returning to the table as he spoke, adding, "Who will hold the box?" putting in the dice and taking it up and rattling them.

But the spirit of the game seemed to have evaporated, and Mr. O'Dicey in vain endeavoured to rally them by urging the losers never to give up then without waiting for a return of luck.

Captain Gammon pleaded satiety for the present. The winners would perhaps give them a chance another night.

"By all means!" exclaimed O'Dicey. "By all means! Only one doesn't like to leave off a winner in one's own house as it were. However, if that's the wish of the party," added he, looking around, "it's not for me to press play—it's not for me to press play," added he, carelessly.

"O, I—I—I de—decidedly think," stuttered the Major, "that we had b—b—better leave off now and start f—f—fresh another night."

"Humph," grunted Mr. Wanless. "That's supposing we have all got the wherewithal to settle with now. I confess I haven't."

"O never mind the settling," replied the off-hand O'Dicey. "Never mind the settling. We can just dot it down on a bit of paper, so that we may know how to begin again the next time. I've known men play for weeks and weeks without ever coming to the final penultimate cash."

"Ah, but short reckonings make long friends," interposed little Curlew, now leading on to the desired point.

"So they do," assented Wanless; "but if anybody will tell me how I am to pay fourteen hundred and twenty pounds, with three half crowns," producing his poor attenuated purse as he spoke, "I should be very much 'bleged to them."

"Oh, I don't mean money down," rejoined Curlew; "I don't mean money down, but a statement of how we stand."

"Ah, to be sure, that's most de-de-sirable," observed the Major, "that's most de-de-sirable; but as to p-p-paying, no man can p-p-pay what he owes over the c-co-counter, as it were."

"Certainly not," replied O'Dicey, "certainly not; credit is the soul of commerce, and why not of cards? Let us see then how each stands, and then we can talk about settling."

Our friends then resolved themselves into a finance committee, and the process of "I O U-ing," and "U O Me-ing," commenced, and proceeded vigorously, each debtor being exceedingly complaisant to his creditor, assenting to whatever sum he claimed. And what with one claim and another, they brought our friends Gammon and Jasper in debtors to above four thousand pounds; so much to this man, so much to that, so much to a third; and as Captain Gammon, who was equally implicated, did not dispute any claim, our greatly disconcerted hero could not do so either. This, the last, account being at last adjusted, Mr. O'Dicey recapitulated the whole as against the partners, and taking a hasty retrospective view of affairs—the amount they had won—

the sum Jasper was said to be good for—together with the insidious glances from beneath the suspicious Spanish hat—he determined to make the bold *coup*, and go for the whole. "May just as well 'stonish the governor with a cheque for four thousand as for two," thought O'Dicey, conning the final proposition in his mind.

"Well now!" exclaimed he, diving his hands up to the hilts in his peg-top trowsers pockets; "Well now, let's see, we are all in the same boat, winners of Mr. Goldspink; suppose, as he's a stranger, and it's not pleasant winning money of young men, that we all join in a double or quits toss, and that will include Gammon's trifle too. It is not pleasant winning money of a young friend in that way," muttered he, frowning, and shaking from side to side, as though the very idea was repugnant to him.

The Major said it wasn't nice, and the other worthies apparently assenting, one cut with the cards was ultimately agreed upon. Jasper turned up the Queen of Hearts, which O'Dicey immediately capped with the King of Spades, and, of course, the debt was doubled.

"What luck!" "Did ever anybody see such luck!" "I think I never saw any thing like it in all my life!" exclaimed the gamblers, with well feigned astonishment, scattering themselves right and left in dismay; in the midst of which, Gammon drew Jasper aside by the arm, and whispered him to leave off, or he would inevitably ruin them both. Our fat friend then stood gaping, wondering how he was ever to get out of the dilemma.

And this well-intentioned effort to extricate him having unfortunately failed, the gamblers again gathered together to try and make the best settlement they could under this perverse aspect of affairs. Mr. Wanless, suddenly recollecting that he was engaged to join a shooting party in Worcestershire, and might not have the pleasure of meeting them again. "It was lucky," he said, "if he hadn't the cash, that he had the wherewithal for procuring it," producing sundry bill stamps from his red leather pocket-book as he spoke; which Captain Gammon seeing, suggested that Mr. Goldspink and he might settle the same way.

"You seem to have plenty of paper there, Wanless; suppose you let my friend and I have the use of some of it."

"With all my heart," replied the obliging gambler; "with all my heart. Take whatever will suit your purpose," handing over a whole sheaf of bill-stamps, two shilling ones, ten shilling ones, fifteen shilling ones, one pound ones.

"By Jove, but you must deal in large sums," observed Captain Gammon, eyeing their amounts. "It will be nothing to a man of your means to take our little debt upon you as well."

"Thank'ee, Gammon, thank'ee," replied Wanless. "I find it's about as much as I can do to pay my own way. Those stamps are meant to cover a multitude of mercantile transactions in all quarters of the globe."

"Bless you, Wanless is one of the largest men in the city of London," observed Mr. O'Dicey. "I'm dashed if I had half his means, but I'd have the longest string of horses at Newmarket, and hunt Leicestershire into the bargain."

"Ah, would you, my friend," replied Wanless. "I know where you'd very soon be if you did. But come," continued he, sorting his stamps, "if I give you," addressing Curlew, "an 'on demand' for your money, I 'spose that will do?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Curlew; "certainly, an I O U is enough for me."

"May as well make it a negotiable instrument," observed the great merchant, getting the ink-stand, and seating himself in a business-like way at the table. He then drew out a promissory note in favour of Curlew, payable on demand at Messrs. Gingleton and Decimal's bank, and presented Curlew therewith, who received it with as much gratitude as if it had been a real transaction.

Wanless then paid a similar compliment to the Major, amid the usual protestations of "No occasion, no occasion; any ti-ti-time will do for me." And having thus settled his own obligations, he was appealed to by the innocent Gammon, who really knew nothing of such matters, to see if he could put Mr. Goldspink and himself in the way of settling too.

"Let me see," said the man of metal, considering matters. "Let me see. You two gentlemen are partners, each owing the same amount. O, I should say, the shortest plan would be to draw on each other in favour of the parties to whom you owe the money."

"Ah, but how to do it's the question," replied Gammon.

"O, I'll soon show you how to do it," replied Mr. Wanless. "Please to give me those stamps here," appealing to O'Dicey, who was examining the collection with the greatest curiosity, as if he had never seen any thing of the sort before. Having got them back, and ascertained the sums, with the names of the banks at which they were to be made payable, Mr. Wanless selected appropriate paper, and proceeded to spread it out, preparatory to filling up.

"On demand, I 'spose," said he, in a matter-of-course tone.

"On demand," assented Captain Gammon, with a chuck of his chin. Whereupon the pen of the ready-writer passed glibly over the paper, and in about the time that it takes to pay a turnpike gate in the country, the onerous documents were ready for endorsement.

"There!" exclaimed the merchant, turning Captain Gammon's bill on its face on the much-used blotting-sheet. "There, you've nothing to do but write the words 'Accepted, Arthur Gammon,' across here," showing the place, "and the thing's done."

"Come along!" cried Gammon, taking the proffered pen, and writing as he was told.

"And you," continued the director, now addressing Jasper, "do

the same across here, only sign your own name instead of Captain Gammon's, you know." And with a shaky hand and sad misgivings, for his father had always charged him never to put his name to anything, our friend perfected the performance.

"There!" said Wanless, rising cheerfully, "the thing's simple enough, you see."

"Simple enough, when you know how," assented Mr. O'Dicey, receiving the bills with a bow.

And with mutual observations that it was much better to square accounts as they went on, regrets that Mr. Wanless would not be able to get his revenge for the present, and hopes that they would soon meet again, and have another jolly evening, with thanks to O'Dicey for the one he had afforded them, the friends proceeded down the spacious staircase of the now noiseless hotel, and were let out into the misty morning air by a drowsy eye-rubbing porter. A division of the party then took place under the portico, some going to the east and some to the west, the surge of the sea accompanying each detachment, and alone breaking the silence of the sleep-wrapt town. And friend Jasper having parted with the last of his expensive companions, rang up the porter on the coffee-room side of the Corinthian Hotel, and retired to his couch with very uncomfortable feelings, which were not at all alleviated when he came to put that and that together on the morrow, and thought how much cooler his head would have been if he had taken a quiet tea with Miss Rosa, instead of dining with O'Dicey.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SUITORS.

Mr. Bunting's entire and devoted submission to Miss Rosa made Mamma feel very independent of Mr. Jasper, who, not being so obedient as he ought under the circumstances, Mamma gave increased liberty to our friend Jack, and aired him out freely and openly, to the surprise of the knowing ones, who thought his affair was settled.

"Why, how is that?" asked Miss Cloverley, opening wide her beautiful darkly-fringed black eyes, not knowing of the private promenades. "Why, how is that? I thought it was all over between Mr. B. and Miss McD.?"

Then came the explanations—oftener wrong than right—but every body likes to be knowing; one showing how ill Mr. Goldspink had behaved to the fair one; another, how the lawyers had quarrelled over the parchments, and would not let it be; a third, how the old curmudgeon down in the country had set his great gouty foot upon it, when, just as the stories were beginning to spread, lo and behold, Miss appeared, with a dangler on each side, the gentlemen looking sweetly at her, and bitterly at each other. Then the mistaken knowing ones had to flounder out of their fictions the best way they could, one saying, "Jones said so;" another, laying it on "Brown;" while the more hardened ones looked wise, and said there was "something wrong notwithstanding."

A lazy, lounging watering-place, where people have nothing whatever to do, but meet and pass, and meet and pass, morning, noon, and night, has a wonderful advantage over a trading, bustling town, and also over the country, where people are scattered far and wide, and can only come together by appointment, and more good business, as the merchants say, can be done in a week at a popular watering-place than in a year anywhere else. The men are idle at the watering-places as well as the ladies, which is a wonderful advantage, nine-tenths of the eligible men of the kingdom being so absorbed in their beloved ten per cent. hunting, as to leave little or no leisure for love. Hence, also, when they do begin wooing, they begin in right earnest; an introduction, a courtship, and an offer not unfrequently following in the same week. And though the time may seem short, and the climax premature, yet when we come to remember that these are railway days, and spread the time out, and apportion it fairly, what with morning rides, sea-

side strolls, balls, concerts, confectioners, and comet, the enchanted ones see quite as much of each other in a week as they might otherwise do in a year. There is also another advantage, namely, that the lady has no occasion to conceal her love, letting "it feed on her damask cheek like a worm i' the bud;" for "quick" is the word, and parties come to the—"What have-you-got? and what-will-you-do?"-point quickly, cutting the cable if things don't suit, and mooring the man if they do. Thus long courtships are avoided, and dilatory young gentlemen spurred up to the point, who might otherwise go on sighing and dying for years. In our particular case, Jasper might have served a regular apprenticeship to Miss Rosa, still keeping himself free and other admirers off; for men have not the same taste for cutting each other out that ladies have, and accept encouragement as a sign of engagement, or of the ladies' willingness to be engaged. As even a Comet, however brisk and fiery, cannot make perpetual summer, still less replenish people's purses, so the waning season, and the still more waning sovereigns, at length warned Mrs. McDermott that she ought to be giving that clear week's notice from the day of entry, without which greedy uttermost-farthing landlords too often insist upon another week's rent. Save on the stage, the closing scene is undoubtedly the weak one anywhere—at a watering-place in particular, for there seems no end to the liabilities—the bills come showering in at the last moment—the parties' gratitude being generally in the inverse ratio to their receipts—large bills, small thanks—each man biting as though he thought that bite would be the last—thus sending forth good walking advertisements against his house for evermore instead of parties to recommend him. Then when the ominous "Let" appears in the window, comes the unpleasantness of living in public for the rest of the time, it being open to any idle inquisitive person to come and look at the rooms to see who the parties are in them, or how they live. So the occupants are exhibited along with the furniture, much in the manner of the inmates of a club, only in a club the liabilities are general instead of being personal on the lady. And as ladies always want to see every thing from the attics down to the cellar, a good quick-eyed woman—such as Mrs. Trattles—would be able to form a tolerable idea of the ways and means of the party—compo-candles, cold mutton, and so on, just as the insolvent dandy indicated the sort of allowance he thought he could manage to keep body and soul together upon, when he said "a wax candle and Eau de Cologne" one.

The Paul Pry system of persecution being very popular at Roseberry Rocks, and our heroine making the house rather a marked one, Mamma and Miss suffered a good deal from this sort of intrusion, the annoyance of which was not lessened by one old lady—Mrs. Saucefield—pretending to take Jasper for the drawing-master as he sat beside Miss with her sketch-book, and begging she might not interrupt Miss Rosa in her lesson. Another day, a whole troop of balloon-like Miss Jewisons came circling

in with Mamma, criticising the rooms, and turning up their oiley hook noses at every thing, talking as though such accommodation might do very well for some people, it wouldn't at all do for them. Then when they got into the street, an observer in the balcony might see their machinery-lace shrouded shoulders rising with laughter as the gaudy bonnets got together, and each party recounted the result of her observation; one what a pair of dirty stockings were hanging over

the chair in the bed-room; another, that somebody's hair-brushes would be better of washing; a third had seen a roll of house flannel hid under the drawing-room sofa; a fourth would have liked to have had a peep into the ottoman; while Mamma declared the larder was filthy, and the kitchen a shame to be seen. Next came the dread house-agent, Mr. Worrypenny, with his ominous red-backed book and pencil

to go through the furniture and check the dilapidations. Then what a list of casualties appeared! Every thing seemed to be more or less injured—cracks, rends, and tears—all the more extraordinary, as Worrypenny said, because there were not no childer. Still he made the most of them. The drawing-room chairs were all more or less damaged in the joints (most likely from the fat boy swinging upon them), while those regular annuities to lodging-letters, the easy chairs, had wholly gone down, and now stood, or rather lounged, in the corners of the room. The commonest crockery could not be matched save at a matchless expense; and the old kitchen utensils were declared to have been wholly worn out in Mrs. McDermott's service. So what with Chousey at one end, and Worrypenny at the other, the estimates for the visit were rather exceeded. That, however, is nothing uncommon, as most of our readers are aware.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TENDER PROP PARRIED.

HEN the "Let" is in the window and the ladies are seen flitting from shop to shop asking for their bills, and those great horse god-mothers, the bathing women, are touting for their tips, it is about time for young gentlemen to be making up their minds, and perhaps for young ladies too, provided they can manage it. So thought our friend, Mr. Admiration Jack, who, though in no hurry to interrupt the pleasant interlocutory process, yet thought that Miss Rosa would be expecting the delicate offer, and that he ought to be making it. He had no doubt that she was desperately in love with him, and was only afraid that Mamma might think he was trifling with her beautiful daughter's feelings if he did not make it. But for this he would have preferred going on a little longer in the eyeing, sighing line, rather than bring matters to a crisis and precipitate those terrible inquiries that immediately follow on the heels of an offer, and prove the downfall to so many flattering prospects. He knew by sad experience what a sudden revulsion takes place as soon as the smoothly gliding broad gauge of sentiment is exchanged for the jolting cross-roads of the end of the journey. How the heretofore smiling affable Mamma suddenly becomes serious—talks of the responsibility of her situation, as if something had happened she was quite unprepared for, and from being all ease and confidence takes to asking the most pointed pertinent questions that ever were propounded. No Old Bailey Barrister, no Detective Policeman, can probe a pocket with such dexterity as some comely matter-of-fact

mothers. They will almost find out how much money a man has in his purse at the moment, and yet appear to be thinking of something else all the while.

All this Mr. Bunting knew and felt, and he would gladly have postponed the day of reckoning were it not that our fair friends departure from the Rocks, opened as it were, a fresh epoch in the matter, and made it necessary either to come to a direct understanding or to make arrangements for carrying on the siege. Our fat friend from the country gave him little uneasiness, for he could never suppose that any young lady would prefer such an uninteresting looking cub as Jasper to himself. So after due consideration of the matter, reviewing the cause of former failures—all of which he now considered most fortunate—he came to the conclusion that this *was* the right young lady, and that he ought to be offering to "love and to cherish her," or, as the countryman repeated it, "to go to London for cherries for her."

In a general way the offer does not require much making. The lady is often far more afraid that she won't get it than that she will. To have an admirer and not bring him to book is considered unskillful. The most hopeless suitors are often encouraged for the mere vanity of the thing; so much admired, so many offers, which are strung together just as boys string eggs upon a line. This big one Brown, this green one Jones, this yellow one Robinson. It is only in cases like the present, where the lady has two strings to her bow, that there is any difficulty, the danger of course being that of saying "Yes" to the wrong one. Not that the lovely ones care much for throwing a man over, but then it requires a little dexterity, and it is best when the right man comes first and the other is let gently down amidst a profusion of good wishes and gratitude. The difficulty is in knowing which is the right one, and as everybody flatters and magnifies up to the offer, a lady may well be bewildered. It is not until the thing is considered settled that people begin to pull the parties to pieces, find out that the young lady has nothing and the gentleman is all faults. In this case there had been great fluctuations both in the minds of Miss Rosa and Mamma as to the relative pretensions of our suitors, Miss not unfrequently leaning towards the Castle, which she thought would be so nice to date her letters from, and Mamma dwelling on the solid advantages of our Banker, who had money enough to build whatever he liked with. At this juncture Mr. Bunting's pretensions had rather improved in consequence of young Plutus's *escapade* with the cards getting bruited abroad, and of course finding its way to Sea-View Place.

The amount lost, though large, was greatly exaggerated, besides which Mamma thought the mere fact of Jasper's playing was greatly against her beautiful daughter's happiness. Rosa could not always be with him to keep him right, added to which his before-men-

tioned intimacy with the Ostler's son at home, which she used to make light of, was now under the beneficial influence of competition brought more prominently forward. Oh dear! she began to be alarmed. Altogether the Bunting funds rose a little; Mamma was more smiling and Miss more winning. If she did not encourage an offer she at all events showed no disposition to let Mr. Bunting go. It is a subtle game that of "Who has the heart?" which nobody can fathom who is not in the secret. Sometimes one seems to have it, sometimes the other, just like the pea under the thimble. Like the pea and the thimble, too, it is a dangerous one; for though competition may produce ardour and emulation, yet one suitor backing out may frighten away the other, and so leave the fair maiden lonely at last.

Then the ladies will rise in reprobation of her conduct—censure her heartless duplicity—declare she is rightly served—and say they don't pity her in the least. No matter how ill soever a woman behaves to a man let him never complain, let him,

> "leave her to the ladies,
> And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
> To prick and sting her;"

they will do the business amongst them.

Mr. Bunting having settled in his own mind that he ought to be advancing nearer the fortifications of the heart, proceeded to take advantage of the opportunities their walks afforded for inquiring more particularly into the whereabouts of their country residence, the summer fêtes, the winter balls, the hunting, the shooting, the coursing capabilities generally. From her he learnt that the county, like most others, was divided into two sets; that the venison-giving Duke of Tergiversation reigned over one party, and Lord Lavender over the other; that the Duchess gave splendid balls, and the Duke magnificent dinners; that the shooting was very good, and the coursing particularly so, though, lady like, she rather confused the greyhounds with Jonathan Jobling's harriers—not an unnatural mistake, seeing that they are both licensed to kill hares. The mention of Jonathan's harriers elicited the fact that the Duke kept foxhounds, whose Scotch huntsman, Mr. Haggis, was always at variance with Jonathan for disturbing their country. "Perfect repose," Miss Rosa, observing, "being essential to the comforts of a fox." Altogether she drew such a flattering picture of their county society and sports, that Mr. Bunting became quite enamoured of it. He really should like to pay it a visit.

Miss said nothing.

A man with a couple of horses might see a good deal of sport, he supposed.

Miss supposed he might.

This was drawing on, and another question, "Would she be glad to see him?" would about settle the point. Miss felt the coming pressure and stepped a little on to Mamma, who was swinging her brown parasol leisurely in front, apparently out of ear-shot but just within hearing. Our hero put on also and was presently alongside of our heroine again.

"Would she be glad to see him if he came?" enquired he, *sotto voce*. Miss pretended not to hear.

"What is that bird?" asked she. "Is it a cormorant?" pointing with her pink-laced parasol to one over-head.

Mr. Bunting looked up. "No, a crow, a carrion crow," replied he, turning to see if there was any confusion visible in her face.

No, she was quite composed. She couldn't have heard him, thought he. Just then they came to the anti-crinoline revolving stile at the bottom of Verbena Lane, and Mamma having gone in and out clever, Miss came up measuring her circumference with its capabilities and wishing herself well through. She wondered her Mamma had come that way from the Downs when there were so many others open to her, where they would not have met anyone, meaning Jasper. She then put down her parasol, and contracting her dimensions with both hands, placed herself in the obstacle while her gallant swain worked the wheel, and got her through without crease or injury.

"Thanks," smiled she, fluffing herself out, as she tripped away from the trap.

Mr. Bunting then revolved on his own account, and quickly followed her.

"I must put that question again," thought he, as he regained his position. Mamma, however, was rather too near. "What a beautiful sunflower!" exclaimed he, drawing Miss Rosa's attention to a great staring one in a little paled garden on the left of the lane. Miss stopped to look and thought it was a large one. Didn't know that she particularly admired sunflowers though.

Well, Mr. Bunting did'nt know that he did either, but still they were showy.

That diversion led them back into the country and enabled Mr. Bunting to get Miss Rosa into her flower-garden at Privett Grove among the verbenas, the heliotropes, the pansies, &c. Mr. Bunting became suddenly fond of flowers and would like to dig her garden for her.

Miss said nothing.

"Would she let him?"

"Yes, if he liked," replied she dryly.

"Well, but would she be glad to see him?" asked he, returning to the old question.

"*Mamma* will be glad to see you," replied the skilful tactician, tripping up to her parent.

"Mamma will be glad to see you," muttered Mr. Bunting, repeating the answer. He had never had such a one before. What did it mean? But ere he could arrive at any satisfactory solution of the mystery, the ladies turned from the bye-lane into the semi-secluded region of Poplar Place, where under

"the variable shade
By the light quivering aspen made,"

poor Miss Snowball was taking a last sad adieu of Captain Languisher (the writings not suiting), and our friend feeling that he had done as much as was necessary to propitiate Mamma and entitle him to continue his advances, restored his conversation into its usual airy nothingness, amidst a sufficiency of which he accompanied the ladies to their door. He was not asked in, because friend Jasper was expected to be there, as in truth he was, lolling on the ricketty sofa, reading *Bell's Life in London* of the previous Sunday. And Mr. Bunting being thus bowed off, the ladies entered the house, and Miss nodding Mamma into the dining-room, recounted what our hero had said, to which Mamma thought Rosa had given a capital answer. Miss then tripped up-stairs to the drawing master, and received him as though she thought of nobody but him. No crow, no sun-flower, no garden, no nothing was visible in her sweetly smiling face.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DEPARTURE.

Though we left Miss Rosa with the drawing-master, it was not for the purpose of superintending the performance of her crayons, but for the unsentimental one of preparing for their journey home. It was arranged they should all go together. "Time was hup," as the old stage-coachmen used to say when they disturbed the passengers at their hasty meals, and another day would see them all off. The last day at any place is always a testy, disagreeable one; half the things one wants are packed up, and every room has a littery, untidy look. The servants are hurried and jaded, what between their own business and ours, and don't know what to do first. Then tiresome people keep calling, knowing that we "will be at home to them," and so the day wears on without getting half through the work. The meals are ill-cooked and uncomfortable—breakfast on the day of departure particularly so—all odds and ends together. Then just as we are starting, come the last of the lingering bills, those that won't bear inspection; the milkman with that marvellous score; the publican with an equally long one; the baker for supplementary muffins. Who,

in the midst of cording, and tieing, and directing, can resuscitate the memory of those manifold measures. Nothing for it, but to pay and resolve never to have any bills for the future, pay for everything at the time, soap, sand, sugar, sticks, and all. But when the next time comes we just go on as before, being sure we can remember what is got. But let us away. The "key" delivered to the dirty charwoman, then come the cabs for the voluminous crinoline and innumerable parcels and packages that stuff every pocket and tower upon the roof, making the cab look like a haystack. Heavens, how it would have astonished a stage coachman of the olden time to have seen the quantity of luggage each passenger claims to have carried now-a-days!

Dress has made a marvellous spring since the introduction of railways. Ladies, whose mothers used to get all their things into a moderate sized box and a carpet-bag, travel with great piano-forte-case-like packages, so numerous that they are obliged to be numbered for fear they forget how many they have. And the more they take the more they want to take, till each lady looks as if she ought to have a luggage-van to herself. Then, to see them attempt the entry of a moderate sized carriage; the utter disproportion of the door to the "object," as it may well be called, that seeks admission! The absurdity of fashion might be tolerated if it inconvenienced only the wearer; but when one lady, extends herself to the size of two, she necessarily takes up the room of two, and must exclude some one else from a seat. A family coach has now no chance of accommodating a family. One full-blown sister must go instead of two natural sized girls. The only advantage we see in the absurdity is, that it forms a sort of graduated scale of gentility; the more extravagant a woman is in her hoops, the less inclined we are to think her a lady. It is only the vulgar who go into extremes, and make themselves look like curtains to bathing-machines.

Well, at length all is ready for a start in Sea-View Place. Mamma and Miss take last looks at themselves in the mirror, hoping they have not forgotten any thing, and down they proceed on the descent of the stairs to the cabs.

The privileged beggar is at the street door, hat in hand, hoping for residuary halfpence, and numerous noses are flattening against the windows of the adjoining houses to see the fair visitors depart, who squeeze into their fly, amidst the speculations by the fair as to the probable result of the visit, and wondering what Miss's name will be next. Bang goes the door; "Station!" cries the footman; whip goes the driver, and away the top-heavy vehicle rolls away along the east end of Sea-View Place, and so into Triton Lane, making for the broad Victoria Road, leading to the railway.

"Stop!" suddenly cries Miss Rosa, starting up in her seat, as they diverge into Triton Lane.

"What's the matter?" asks Mamma, looking if Rosa has left her watch.

The watch is there, but she has forgotten our old friend the musical snuff-box, though she had put it on the centre of the mantel-piece, on purpose that she might see and carry it away in her hand. If she had put it on the centre of the table, she most likely would, but what lady can be expected to see anything save her own pretty face above the mantel-piece.

"Stop!" cries Mamma, poking the footman in the back through the let-down front window with her parasol.

"*Stop!*" repeats he to the driver, and forthwith the cumbrous vehicle stops, and John Thomas is touching his hat at the door.

"Oh, dear!" exclaims Mrs. McDermott, in a half timid, half propitiatory tone, "Oh dear! I'm afraid we've forgotten the musical box. It's on the drawing-room mantel-piece. I wish you would just step back and see."

"Yez, 'um," says John, thinking how long it will take him to go.

"And then come after us as quickly as you can to the station, you know."

"Yez, 'um," says John, fore-fingering his hat.

"Go on then," cries Mrs. McDermott to the driver, and forthwith the ponderous vehicle is again nid-nodding on its way to the station.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ROSEBERRY ROCKS STATION.

People generally see more of a station on leaving a place than they do on arriving; for, on arriving, every body's business seems to be to expedite every body else, and hurry them through as quickly as ever they can. "Cab, sir?" is the first sound that greets an arrival, and every porter seems anxious to get a traveller into one. Then the cabs come pouring in from some invisible source in such continuous line, that one might almost fancy they passed round and round the station, just as the handful of sham soldiers that compose the standing army at a theatre pass at the back and the front of the stage until the gods in the gallery begin to laugh at their familiar faces. On a departure, travellers, especially those who have been left behind once or twice, generally manage to have a little time on hand to take their tickets, get a bun, and secure seats. This done, they feel somewhat comfortable, and compose themselves for a stare.

It is a lively scene; all the gaiety of the packet-service without the sickness. Indeed, it is better than the packet-service; for while the

sea air, salt water, and stuffy cabin, deter ladies from expensive dress, so the spacious comfort, and perfect shelter of the railway station, invite a liberal display of clothes. The Roseberry Rocks Station was built quite on the "money-no-object" principle of the early development of railways,—light, lofty, spacious, and elegant,—with a fine holiday air about it. The white marble stands in the highly decorated refreshment rooms are piled with the most tempting viands, solids, fluids, fruits, sweets of all sorts. Every thing looks so nice and fresh, that a stranger helps himself boldly without troubling to inquire when the tarts or the cakes were made—so necessary at some stations—where they have always a last week's sandwich or pie ready to foist upon the unwary.

Nor is food for the mind forgotten in providing for that of the body. The books look so new and gay, and, above all, are so cheap—a shilling for what used to cost a guinea a few years since.

One of the peculiarities of modern travel is the great demand there is for books, a book to prevent people seeing the country being quite as essential as a bun to prevent their being hungry. Formerly, a newspaper was considered rather an extravagance, and one paper in a coach was quite enough for the crew. It passed round and round till they had all had enough—though papers were not of the table-cloth size in those days—a single sheet, no supplement, and sevenpence the price. Some people say that they have seen the country till they are tired of it, and know all the views and scenery on the line. True, but that is not making any allowance for the change produced by the seasons, the buds, the leaves, the hay, the grass, the corn, the "tormots," the sowing, the reaping, the stacking. A railway ride presents a rapid panorama of agriculture; a passenger sees the transition from good to bad farming, from good to bad land, from drained to undrained soil, in a quick, pointed, forcible, unmistakeable way, provided he will but look.

But the train of ideas has carried us into the country, instead of letting us attend to the railway train at the elegant Roseberry Rocks' Station.

Though the place may not be so favourable to the pursuits of the little hair-dresser on the back of our work, as shady groves, cooing doves, and splashing waterfalls; and the wheelings of the barrow porter may not be so musical as the notes of the nightingale; yet it is capable of a great deal of useful application and a skilfully managed tear at parting has brought suitors to book, whose modesty or whose fickleness have survived the rides and drives of the Rocks. It was at the end of the Fern Hill departure line that Captain Leopold Hobson whispered something in Lavinia Lawson's ear that sent her flying away as happy as a lark, and it was in the ladies' waiting-room that the timid Peter Muffins slipped the little pink three-cornered note into Arabella Benson's hand, that ultimately made her

Mrs. Muffins. Here, too, Esau Jones is said to have offered to Miss Swithinbank, and Mr. Brown to Miss Green.

On this our departing, day as Jasper Goldspink, stood victorious over the accumulated luggage of himself and ladies, Mrs. McDermott soothed the parting pang by assuring Mr. Admiration Jack that they (they, not she as Miss Rosa put it) would be glad to see him at Privett Grove if he ever came into their part of the country, and when after due ringing of bells, taking of seats, banging of doors, and showing of tickets, the inexorable whistle at length sounded and the train began to move, Miss Rosa gave him one of those assuring smiles that completely prevented any idea of her ever being anybody else's than his. And as the puffing, snorting engine whisked the train out of the station, Jasper lolling luxuriously inside a carriage and Jack looking wistfully after it, each felt a pang of pity for the other.

And now gentle reader which hero will you take for choice?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LONDON IN AUTUMN.

We need not say that Mr. Bunting did not stay long at Roseberry Rocks after our heroine had left. The place seemed quite changed after she was gone. True, there was the sea, and the shore, and the downs, and the cantering horses, and the cantering ladies, and the comet; but neither the comet, nor the cantering ladies, nor the downs, nor the sea, nor the shore, without "her" were sweet. The recollection of whose company he had last seen any of them in made them quite unpalatable to him. Then as he sauntered carelessly about, the anxious gossips stared suspiciously at him, and people exclaimed "What! are *you* still here?" as though they thought he ought to be somewhere else. At length, when he mustered courage to take a peep at the beloved house in Sea-View Place and saw the ponderous Mrs. Barkinson and three Miss Barkinsons sunning themselves in the balcony that had heretofore held his incomparable beauty, and a great red-armed cook bargaining for a cod-fish, his too sensitive heart sickened at the sight and determined him to leave altogether.

A flit homewards has the advantage of a flit outwards, inasmuch as there is no picking and sorting and choosing, and everything is included in the order. It is "pack up my things" and away, instead of "look out my things, that I may see what to take." So in a very short space of time after the determination was come to, Mr. Bunting's voluminous wardrobe—his costly coats, his magnificent shirts, and various shoes, all the paraphernalia of a swell—were reposing layer

upon layer and pile upon pile in very deep and convenient boxes; and having duly discharged the pecuniary obligations of the place, his profile was next seen nodding in a cab under a pyramid of luggage, which again set the gossips a-going to contradict their assertions that "It was all off between Miss McDermott and Mr. Bunting: he was gone to see about the settlements;" upon which hypothesis, and also upon the faith of what Mrs. Tartarman said she saw at the station (doubtless the assuring parting glance), sundry hats, gloves, and sovereigns changed hands, and the thing was considered as good as settled. Parties then turned their attention to the more budding and incipient flirtations — Miss Thorneycroft and Mr. Flushings, Miss Cheeseroy with Captain Rivulet, Tommy Dipnal with Mrs. Rule. And our friend Mr. Bunting, having got his ticket and ensconced himself in a corner of the carriage, one good stroke of the Magnet engine shot him away from sea and shore, and shells and sentiments, hats, habits, and hoops — all the cares and contentions of Roseberry Rocks; and as people who have nothing whatever to do are always in a desperate hurry, the flying express landed him in London ere he had turned the second couplet of a stanza he was weaving to the beautiful lady He was then ejected from his comfortable cushions into a hard-featured Hansom upon the vast desert of the empty metropolis. At a touch of the whip the high-bred screw started off as if it had not had a fare for a week. Save in a dense yellow fog, when the place is unbearable, London is perhaps never seen to such disadvantage as in the dead of the autumn; there is nothing stirring but stagnation; the very cabmen sleep on their boxes or pore over books, as if being called off the stand was quite out of the question. The streets are deserted, save by the busses and a few drowsy old horses, too palpably drawing the doctor. Late hospitable houses now show you nothing but their shutters; lethargic town-bound men yawn about St. James's Street, crawling from one club to another, to compare the thermometers and see if each copy of the paper is the same. Those great warrens of society are put away, carpets rolled up, mirrors gauzed, fenders dissected, waiters reduced, papers few, and the chiefs of the staff away on their travels. A barrier of a notice at the bottom of the staircase, announces that the drawing-rooms and library are getting cleaned. The hall porters at the great political clubs have little to do, either in the way of entries or letters. How changed the Park! Frizzled leaves and fried grass. Two donkeys and a goat-carriage compose the activity. Chairs are indeed at a discount, and the letters now have time to repair the astonishing mounds of broken ones that accumulate during the season. A few tawdry careless nurses, with pallid children, lounge listlessly up the line where lately

> "knights and dames,
> And all that wealth and lofty lineage claims,
> Appeared."

London is always completely out of town in the autumn. The lodging-letters put up their notices in a sort of matter-of-course way, and a staring stranger, with a slip of paper in his hand, attracts the cupidity of the whole street. The advertising hotel-keepers, those who, like Mr. Chousey, make out their bills by the almanac, now announce that this *is* the real cheap time. And so it ought, for people should be paid for staying in town.

Our friend Mr. Bunting, as he paced the silent streets and squares, might have an occasional hail out of a gun or cigar shop door from some passing-through sportsman recruiting or replenishing his stock as he went; but few, very few people pleaded guilty to being town-stayed altogether. Those who did, laboured hard to persuade him that this was the most sociable time of the year, when people saw their friends without fuss or ceremony, and met with but indifferent success in their exertions. Here, however, leaving him for the present, let us follow our fair friend to Privett Grove.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MISS ROSA AT MAYFIELD.

The first thing that strikes a returning traveller after a visit to great places, is the extreme smallness and littleness of everything he before thought great and good. It is the same sort of feeling that pervades a man on revisiting the scene of his school-boy days, when he finds lofty hills reduced to very low ones, large houses become extremely small, and broad rivers mere brooks. Thus it was with our fair friends on their return from Roseberry Rocks. Everything seemed stunted and dwarfed. The well-laurelled drive from the Thorn Tree Road up to the house seemed narrow and short; the house contracted, the trim lawn lessened, and the garden half its former size.

But it is the small country towns that show to most disadvantage after visiting such places as London or Roseberry Rocks. The people seem so sleepy and slow—the shops so small and unstocked—the keepers so easy and stupid. They are generally eating, and don't seem to care much whether they serve a customer or not. So it was with the star-fish-shaped town of Mayfield, stretching its finger-like streets out upon the rich green meadows around. One such is a type of the whole. A square stone-towered church on one side of a market-place, a brick town-hall upon arches in the middle, with a perpetually "going" but never gone mugger behind, large stone or flaming red brick houses with green doors and bright brass knockers

alternating with inns and smaller houses around, and the aforesaid finger-like streets stretching out in all directions, generally tapering towards turnpike-gates in the distance. And yet these outlandish places generally contain an amazing amount of comfortable self-complacency—the residents thinking there are no such people as themselves, that they give the tone to the rest of the world. The men stand staring with their great gummy hands deep in their trouser-pockets, criticising each horse and passer-by, and regulating the affairs of the nation, while the ladies sweep about like meandering shower-baths, thinking they set the fashion and all others follow them. Then on a Thursday, the market-day, when the natives ferment into activity, what a conglomeration of consequence takes place, town and country stupidity amalgamate, and everything is settled off-hand—George Brown, the wise man of the place, saying a thing, and everybody else repeating it, for what "George" says must be right, and from his decision there is no appeal.

It was on a fine autumnal day that our fair friend drove herself and Mamma in their neat basket-carriage drawn by the pretty white pony, Miss, with her glossy hair in braids, under the piquant Spanish hat and blue feather, into the good town of Mayfield, just at the high 'Change of market time, to the delight of the Hawbucks and the charm of the Chawbacons, who declared they had never seen "nothin' so pretty afore." She created quite a sensation. Mrs. Winfield, the eating-housekeeper, desisted from carving a goose; Mr. Sanders, the grocer, upset all the currants; Geordey Ribstone, the itinerant apple-man, trundled his laden barrow over Mrs. Cream, the butter-woman's toes; while Mr. Shepherd, the grazier, who was handling a heifer, broke clean away, and came bounding over the cattle-pens to get a nearer look at the lady. All were in ecstasies about her, and her health was drunk at the farmers' ordinary at the Fox and Hounds, the Hare and Hounds, and the Greyhound and Hare. Still Miss felt the insignificance of the triumph, and would gladly have exchanged it for a glorious hour at Roseberry Rocks—with the gentlemen all praising, and the ladies abusing her. And when having purchased a pennyworth of pins at one place, and a halfpennyworth of ribbon at another, she drove to Mrs. Muslins, the *modiste* at the corner of Hay Street, who has her millinery on one side of the shop, and books and muffins on the other, Rosa saw a painful difference between it and Madame Bergamotte's beautiful bonnet-shop, to which she had paid so many satisfactory visits. And having looked at the "World of Fashion," and bought the current Number of "Punch," she resumed her charioteership, and trotted briskly up the south side of the Market Place to our banker's private door. Mrs. Goldspink, of course, being at home, the pony was left in charge of the boy, while "Sairey," the maid, announced the visitors; and the healthy looks and smart hat having been duly discussed, our travellers proceeded to pour out all their watering-place

exploits and intelligence, Mamma drawing Mr. Bunting's name to and fro in a triumphant sort of way, as if to let Mrs. Goldspink see they were not wholly dependent upon Jasper.

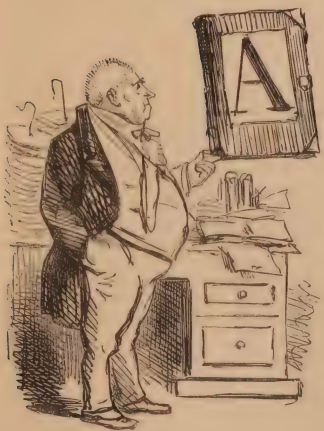
That genius was playing skittles at the Bear and Ragged Staff skittle-ground, and this being market-day, and the time of year when farmers mortgage their stack-yards to raise the forthcoming rent, our Banker himself sported his oak or rather his wainscot, on which was nailed a card containing the following characteristic notice:—

> "Call on a Business man in Business Hours only on Business. Transact your Business and go about your Business, in order to give him time to finish his Business.
>
> "Mayfield Bank,
> "*Established* 1774."

With which caution staring him in the face, it would require a bold man to intrude into our Banker's den. So the ladies having talked till they were tired, at length took their departure, to the great delight of many half-holiday children all crowding round the pretty white pony with the beautiful blue ribbons at its head. And Mamma having resumed her seat, Miss gathered her smart wash-leather reins, and at a light touch of the parasol'd whip, the pony whisked its long silky tail and trotted off gaily with its head towards home. Mrs. Goldspink then resolved herself into a committee of taste, and decided that Miss had come home very airified, and might have Mr. Bunting, if she liked. Their Jasper was not a young man to be sneezed at. Indeed she didn't know such another, and altogether Mrs. Goldspink was not very well pleased, and thought that the "girl" looked a great deal better with her hair in ringlets than as she now had it. Wished she mightn't have got her head turned by her trip.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SIVIN AND FOUR'S ELIVIN.



ALTHOUGH old Sivin and Four was one of that numerous tribe who see no beauty in anything but a good balance-sheet, yet the instinctive promptings of an ambitious wife, coupled with the fact of his odious rival Mr. Dibworth having set up a country house (Discount Park as it was called, its real name being Daisy Bank), made him rayther incline to follow suit — provided, of course, he could do so without any very grievous sacrifice of his beloved cash. It took him a long, long time, and many careful calculations, before he came to any such conclusion. "Sivin and four's elivin," he used to begin in the gloomy solitude of his sweating room, with the pertinent notice outside, "Sivin and four's elivin, and sivin's eighteen, and three's twenty-one, don't know that it would cost much more to live in the country than it does here, and eight is twenty-nine—might kill one's own mutton and save twopence i' pund that way, and nine is thirty-eight—would have to keep a chay, but then the nag would lead the coals, and sivin is forty-five—might turn him to account in other ways, and six is fifty-one—a cow would come in capital, and sivin is fifty-eight, and help to keep a pig, and eight is sixty-six—might have some poultry too, and sivin is sivinty-three, and eggs at summut like trade price."

The idea having once entered his mind, when it was not at all encumbered with company, he worked it up and down and round about with all the variation of figures until he got it firmly fixed, and then he began to talk incontinently to masons and joiners, and painters and plumbers, and people when they came on their usual excursions to the Bank, about land and labour, and sand and plaster, and prices generally. And here let us observe, that in addition to immunity from abuse, bankers enjoy another advantage, namely, that of not getting cheated, and of having everything they want at trade or nearly trade price; no one daring to impose upon them lest they should retaliate the next time the unlucky wight wanted a slip of stamped paper converted into sovereigns or nice crisp £5 notes. So each tradesman told our friend in a quiet confidential sort of way what their usual charges were, but what they could do such and such things for if he should happen to want them. And having sifted and sorted, and "sivin and four'd" these matters well in his mind, and arrived at some sort of conclusion as to what he could build such a house as would serve his purpose for, he next began casting about in quest of an estate to place it upon. The first purchasing symptoms that developed themselves were when our banker, having got a glass, began button-holeing his man—generally some one whom he knew hadn't the means—and asking if he was going to buy—buy Selwood Hill, Beechwood Grove, the Haw, or whatever estate was in the market. All glorious glass! that can unlock the inmost heart of such a man as this, and make him tell what the rack would hardly extort in cool sobriety. How his cold grey eye glistened as he brought his great protuberant stomach and nasty brandy-smelling breath to bear against some unfortunate wight while he poured forth the history of his wealth—his bonds, his mortgages, his money in the funds, his intended purchases of property. He seemed to have a design upon every place, large or small, rich or poor, near or distant. But when the sobering dawn of day returned, he took no steps to realise his grand prospects and enable him to show off as Peter Pounce showed off to poor Parson Adams, when the latter rode with Peter in his chariot, by exclaiming, "Ah! my heir will have reason to wish I had loved money more and land less;" for if reminded of his grand monopolising land scheme, Sivin and Four would seem to have forgotten all about it, and would hurry away as if afraid of committing himself by a single indiscreet word.

At length things took a different turn. The reader may remember the Sivin and Four prognostication of a deuce of an overdraw, by the Duke of Tergiversation, on account of the present of the haunch of venison; and His Grace did not disappoint the prophet's expectations, for cheque after cheque came dribbling in, till our friend was almost frantic. First there came one for a hundred and twenty-three pounds for Mashtub the brewer, next one for seventy-nine pounds for Charbon

the coal merchant, then one for fifty on account for Mulcture the miller, and lastly one for two hundred and ninety for Spanker the horse-dealer of Dunchurch. "Sivin and four's elivin, and ninety-nine's a hunderd and ten; how the deuce can any man carry on business in this way?" exclaimed he, as the latter was brought in to him; "and sivinty's a 'undred and eighty—might just as well throw open the door and give him the run of the till, and ninety's two 'underd and sivinty—wish most heartily Dibworth had him—would stop his gallop in no time—soon set his ricketty concern to rest."

Now we mentioned that the Duke had a small property—small at least for a Duke—called Garlandale, a few miles from Mayfield, on the Canons Ashby Road—which was not tied up in the stringent way peculiar to peerages, and upon this our Banker had long cast an eye as peculiarly adapted, in his mind, in consequence of its freedom from toll-bars, for the erection of a villa residence. He had even gone so far as to mention it incidentally to Mr. Acreage, the steward, saying, that he wondered his Grace kept a little out-lying place of that sort, for which he dared say he could get him a customer; and once, after dining at the Fox and Hounds farmers' ordinary, and imbibing the communicative glass, the Banker went so far as to say that he wouldn't mind buying it himself, adding, with a slap of his brandy-charged stomach, and a wink of his hazy eye, "you know I'm a *substantial* man."

People, however, don't like selling land, and somehow or other the thing never got any further. But when the cheques began dropping in, completely overbalancing an already top-heavy account, our Banker got fidgetty, and finding he could make nothing of Mr. Acreage, he determined to open a correspondence with his Grace himself. So he took a large square sheet of paper, and beginning quite at the top of the page, as if he had a great deal to communicate, he commenced with the ominous words, "Mayfield Bank, established 1774," and proceeded in a very few lines to draw his Grace's attention to his account, and request that he would reduce the balance against him as soon as convenient. The Duke, however, having a good nose for a dun, took no notice of the letter, upon which our friend wrote him another, more pressing and mandatory in its terms, which sharing a similar fate, as soon as our Banker heard that the flag was flying on the castle keep, indicating that his Grace had arrived in the country, he ordered Tripper's one-horse chaise, and dressing himself in his seediest apparel, and very impoverished it was, he proceeded to the siege of the Duke's fortress, a castle that seemed to command the whole country. Nor did the Banker quail as mile after mile lessened the distance and revealed the size and strength of the place; its ivy-mantled towers rising majestically above ancient trees rich in the luxuriance of their autumnal tints. Nor did the park appal him, nor the frowning gates, the massive loop-holed walls, the inner walls,

the moat, the bastion or the bridge, he seemed to pass through everything as a matter of course, and after a rumble under the frowning portcullis, the noiseless sweep of a wood-paved court-yard brought him up short at a little door on the left of the vestibule.

"Shall I ring, sir?" now asked Wagstaff the ostler, who had driven him, descending and touching his greasy hat with his baggy Berlin-gloved hand.

"Ring," replied the Banker, dry-shaving his double-chin, adding, "and ask if the Duke is at home."

Wagstaff then gave one of those extraordinary lurches peculiar to stable-men, and hitched himself up the steps to the door. Taking the little brass nob of the bell, he drew it with the greatest caution, and then stood listening for a response, like a terrier with its ear at a rat-hole. Slight as the summons was, it answered the purpose, and brought a powdered footman to the door, whose trim undress clothes contrasted with the miscellaneous half-plain half-livery costume of the comer.

"Duke at home?" muttered the driver, as if half afraid of asking the question. What if the Duke should insist upon seeing him!

"Who is it?" asked the footman.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and eighteen's twenty-nine—what business is that of his, I wonder," muttered the Banker, sitting forward in the little chaise, and again lowering the white worsted comforter from his face, so that the servant might see.

"O, I beg pardon, sir," continued the servant stepping down to the carriage-door; "beg pardon, sir—don't know whether his Grace is at home or not; but if you'll please to alight, sir, I'll show you in to Mr. Cucumber, who will be able to tell you," so saying, the man unfolded the jingling steps of the carriage, and proffered our Banker an arm to descend.

"Wait!" exclaimed Mr. Goldspink to the driver, as his foot touched *terra firma;* so saying he bundled in after the footman, leaving the driver to hitch to and fro, and flagellate himself into warmth with his arms, at the door.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MR. CUCUMBER.

We do not know under what denomination of servant Mr. Cucumber came, for he did not fill any of the offices in the curious *mélange* at the head of the tax-papers, that makes little people thankful they are not great ones. He was neither a maître d'Hôtel, nor a house-steward, nor a master of the horse, nor a groom of the chamber, nor a valet, nor a butler, nor an under-butler, nor a clerk of the kitchen, nor a confectioner, nor a cook, nor a house-porter, nor a footman, nor a running footman; neither did he fill any of the various out-of-door offices enumerated in the list, being in point of fact neither more nor less than a dun-stopper, and therefore we should think as exempt from duty as old Willy Walker the earth-stopper who shuts the foxes out of their homes for the Duke's hounds. Be that, however, as it may, dun-stopping was Cucumber's *forte*, and he was extremely expert at it. From his easy chair on the central tower, he could sweep all the converging roads to the castle, select such vehicles as should pass, and arrange such a string of excuses for those to be turned, as were never surpassed. He was always "*so sorry*" the Duke wasn't in—would have been so happy to have seen Mr. Maskell, Mr. Lewis, or whoever it was. His Grace was just gone to Orbelle Petty Sessions, or had left not half an hour before for Tidswell Tower. Wondered Mr. So-and-So hadn't met him. And there was such a frank open air about his hearty face that none but a trickster could doubt his sincerity. Even if the Duke was seen meandering about among the laurels and evergreens of the shrubbery, composing, as was his wont, an explosion for Parliament, Cucumber would declare it wasn't him—"some person very like him though," he would say. So he smoothed them, and liquored them, and sent them away, trusting to chance for a better excuse another time. Having the run of the Duke's letters, he easily divined what had brought the old coronet-winkered and pelican-padded mare to the side-door, and collected his faculties as the Banker traversed the somewhat gloomy corridor leading to his presence.

A great man's great man is generally a much greater man than the great man himself, and, both in size and importance, the duplicate far surpassed the original. Indeed the Duke, who was generally in difficulties, could be as free and easy as any one when it suited his purpose,

while Cucumber having no cares or contentions, no bills to meet or balances to square, revelled from year's end to year's end in the tranquillity of stately enjoyment. He was always "Mr. Cucumber," tall, portly, and pompous, to whom the little children touched their caps in trembling awe, and tradesmen toadied with obsequious servility. Our great man having had his peep, had resumed his wine and walnuts, when our Banker was announced, and laying down the "Post," he arose from his easy chair, and drawing himself out to his utmost altitude, towered imposingly above the little man, just as one sees a great dog impressing its importance on a little one prior to the commencement of a conflict.

Mr. Cucumber "was extremely glad to see Mr. Goldspink" bowing and tendering him the two fore fingers of friendship, then motioning him to a seat as he resumed his own.

"Sivin and four's clivin, and clivin's twenty-two," rayther a cool customer this, I think, poking his hat under his seat, "Must just pitch into him with the book." So saying our banker dived into his greasy-mouthed outside coat-pocket, and fishing out first a dirty snuff-coloured bandana, next a rusty-looking old ready-reckoner, he finally drew forth that *multum in parvo*, the passbook containing the skimmings of so many transactions, annuities, jointures, dowers, mortgages, bonds, bills, &c. "Sivin and four's clivin, and eighteen's twenty nine—just called to speak to his Grace 'bout his little 'count with us," the spokesman tapping the ill-omened parchment-backed book with his podgy finger-nails as he spoke.

"Oh, indeed," replied Mr. Cucumber coolly, "what the balance is getting too great for you to hold for us is it? Well, Christmas is coming on, and His Grace will soon draw a little out for you now that he's here."

Sivin and four's clivin, and ninety-nine's a underd and ten, never heard such an impittant dog in my life, mused the Banker, eyeing Cucumber severely.

"No," retorted Mr. Goldspink, with irritated eyes, "not too heavy to hold, but too much over the left to allow of my keeping."

"Ah, indeed," rejoined Mr. Cucumber blandly, seeing he had gone too far, and recollecting that he had a post-dated cheque of his Grace's that would be about coming due, which he would like to have cashed. "Ah, indeed, sorry to hear that; but his Grace you know is the most careless man in money matters that was ever known. However, it will not be an insurmountable sum I dessay, and our rent day's coming on which will put all matters right, so take a glass of wine and come back—say the Monday after the rent day—and then see what we can do for you."

Sivin and four's clivin, and sivin eighteen, that won't suit me, pondered our friend, looking at his shabby shoes, and sivin's twenty-five—must have a word with the Duke himself to-day; so settling

that matter in his own mind, he next looked the splendid man full in his great prosperous harvest-moon face, set off with a profusion of slightly frosted curling brown hair and whiskers, and declared that the case was so urgent and necessitous, that nothing but a personal interview with his Grace would have the least effect, and he even went so far as to hint that the stability of the Bank—a Bank "stablished sivinteen underd and sivinty-four," might be jeopardised; and altogether his manner was so urgent and impressive that, used as Cucumber was to the imperative mood, he could not sustain the picture which the banker's fancy had drawn. He thought there must be something in it, and fearing for his own "fifty," he determined to depart from his general rule, and endeavour to get the Duke to see his unwelcome guest.

"Take the paper," said he, handing the banker the "Post," "and I'll try what I can do for you." So saying, Cucumber gave his bushy whiskers a renovating brush at the glass, and disappeared through an invisible door in the wainscot.

"That 's an impittant chap I'll be bund," said the Banker as the door closed on his exit. He then began thinking what he should say to the Duke when he got to him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DUKE OF TERGIVERSATION.

Though the Duke of Tergiversation was still "young and curly" as Mr. Disraeli would say, yet his immediate predecessor, Duke Fortunatus Emanuel, had enjoyed such a prolonged reign that his Grace had nearly eaten out his life estate before he got possession, an inconvenient position for a nobleman of his Grace's great spending abilities, with a son, the Earl of Marchhare, now coming on, fully equal to his sire. The consequence was, that the Duke was a good deal importuned by parties wanting their little bills, while he on his part, importuned each successive minister for place or power, or something that would bring him in money. He was not at all scrupulous which side he claimed it from, being of the Walpolean creed that every man has his price, if not on his back, under his coat collar, in the lining of his hat, or somewhere about him. So he went on parrying and promising, but seldom or ever paying, it being, as we have already stated, Mr. Cucumber's prerogative to shield his Grace from that disagreeable plebeian necessity. Now, however, Cucumber had to take the other side, and learning from Monsieur Millefleur that he had got his Grace up for the day, paper boots, satin tie, smart coat, and so on, he stole softly into his Grace's luxurious dressing-room, with a well-assumed flurry that plainly bespoke mischief.

"What's the matter?" asked the Duke who had seldom seen his *fidus Achates* so discomposed.

"Oh dear," whispered Cucumber, "here's that horrid boor of a banker come bothering about his pestilent balance."

"O send him to the devil!" retorted the Duke kicking out his right leg as he spoke.

"Ah! but he's in a very stiff mood," replied Cucumber, "and doesn't seem at all inclined to be put off."

"Send him to Mr. Acreage! send him to Mr. Acreage! I can't have all these base mechanics coming here!" exclaimed the Duke indignantly.

"Well, but he's seen Mr. Acreage, and Mr. Acreage can do nothing for him," replied Mr. Cucumber calmly.

"Send him to Mr. Docket then! send him to Mr. Docket! He can talk to him better than I can," retorted the Duke.

"Ay, but he tells me that it is of the most vital importance that

he should see you himself, that in fact (added Cucumber, *sotto voce*), the stability of his bank depends on his doing so."

"Confound the stability of his bank," muttered the Duke "what have I to do with the stability of his bank?—honour enough that I take his nasty notes. They smell enough to make one sick!"

"Well; but if the bank stops," whispered Mr. Cucumber, "it will only make matters worse, for the officious—I mean the official assignee will walk in, and people will all have to pay up their balances—"

"The deuce!" exclaimed the Duke, not liking that view of the matter.

"It will be so," observed Mr. Cucumber, creeping up to his point.

"But is there any run upon the old crazy concern?" asked the Duke.

Mr. Cucumber. "Don't know; but he evidently expects one, I should say."

The Duke, after a pause. "Well, well; tell him if it will restore confidence I will drive up to the door in my carriage and four—four grays you know!"

"P'raps if your Grace was to see him and say so, it would come better from you than from me."

"Rot the fellow! I hate the sight of him, and detest him afresh every time I see him," replied the Duke frowning. "I don't see why you can't smooth him over. You've had as obstinate fellows to deal with as him."

"True; only a bank, you see," observed Mr. Cucumber, "is such a ticklish affair, that a man p'raps hardly likes to trust a third person like me."

"Well; but surely the four grays will do something," observed the Duke soothingly; "promise him out-riders too, if you like."

Cucumber, however, still stood out. He wanted to get his cheque cashed, and thought obtaining the desired interview would be a step in that direction. So he pressed the Duke to see the poor man, observing that he could soon get him off his hands again—only to tell Garnett to announce somebody else, and so what with encouragments and alarms, he left the Duke much in the mood of a man about to take a black draught, and inveighing bitterly against the ingratitude of a man who could take his venison and then ask for his money.

Meanwhile Mr. Cucumber returned to our friend, and after magnifying the favour he had done him, and charging him not to let out that he had not seen Mr. Acreage, he passed him on to Mr. Garnett to conduct to his Grace.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE INTERVIEW.

"Ah, my dear Mr. Goldspink!" exclaimed the Duke, advancing with outstretched hands with all the cheerful cordiality imaginable as

our crab-actioned friend followed the smoothly gliding Mr. Garnett into the presence—"Ah, my dear Mr. Goldspink, this is indeed most

kind and considerate. First neighbour that has come to greet us. How, may I ask, is your worthy wife and your excellent son?" taking both the banker's hands and shaking them severely.

"Sivin and four's elivin and sivinty-sivin's eighty-eight, on the gammon and spinach tack I guess—thank your Grace—his Grace—my Grace, that is to say—they are both pretty well,—hope the Duchess and my Lord Marchhare ——"

"The Duchess and Marchhare are both at this moment enjoying a quiet cup of tea in her pretty little boudoir, where I am sure they will be most happy to see Mr. Goldspink," the Duke motioning him onwards to the gilt-moulded white door opposite.

"Sivin and four's elivin and sivin's eighteen, must stop him from that," decided our friend, diving into his coat-pocket again for the ominous book. "I just called (hum), I just took the liberty of ——"

"Ah! but you haven't seen my new Swaneveldt!" interrupted the Duke; "grand Italian landscape, with peasants crossing a wooden bridge over a cascade which falls from a woody height," now trying to turn the man of money to a door in another direction.

"Thank 'e, your Grace, thank 'e," rejoined the Banker, backing instead of advancing. "I would just wish to speak one word with your Grace in private before we go."

"By all means!" exclaimed the Duke, "by all means; only we can talk and look too, you know—got a new Velasquez as well—view of the Siena Morena; a château on the right, near a stream of water, with figures on a road—vast expanse of open country beyond enclosed by a mountainous background—painted with great spirit and masterly effect," continued the Duke, still leading on to the other door.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and sivinty-four's eighty-five; wonder whether it's paid for or not," mused our friend, reluctantly following.

They then got into the picture-gallery—a noble apartment full of portraits, pictures, carvings, busts, crystals, bronzes, all the ingredients of indefinite expense; for though the Duke might not be able to pay for a horse, he could always purchase a Hobbema, if there happened to be one in the market. And as every one thinks his hobby is interesting to others, so the Duke kept stopping his visitor's musing with Titians and Teniersses and Rubenses, and articles of *virtù* generally.

Though the Duke talked of the Duchess as an affable lady who would be glad to give Mr. Goldspink a friendly cup of tea, yet our Banker knew better, and was not going to be cajoled that way; so whenever his Grace desisted from praising a background or expatiating on the effects of light and shade, he at him with his wants in such a steady persevering way, that at last not even a Snyders with a peacock, a turkey cock, a cock and hen, rabbits and guinea-pigs, could parry his importunities, and the Duke was at length obliged to succumb and hear what he had to say. The Banker then at him with his open newly written-up passbook, with a terrible bringing forward, to which

he pointed with his fat forefinger, declaring that "it was going to be the ruin of his bank—bank 'stablished sivinteen 'underd and sivinty-four—and he really would be 'bleged to his Grace if he would take immediate steps for reducing the amount."

"Oh dear! that's nothing!" replied his Grace, taking a cursory glance at the figures. That's nothing. "Why, Flint and Stone, of Friday-street, never notice an account until it gets into the teens of thousands."

"True, your Grace—true, I dare say it's very true; but then they are people in a great way of business, with the Bank of England at their backs; whereas I'm a poor lonely individual, just able by the greatest caution and prudence to keep my head above water and no more. I 'sure your Grace," continued the Banker, increasing in earnestness as he proceeded, "it's with the greatest reluctance I trouble your Grace, but it really is a case of necessity, or I wouldn't have come."

"Well, well," interrupted the Duke, "I'll see what I can do for you against the rent-day—or speak to Mr. Acreage—he's the Chancellor of the Exchequer; I only spend the money,—he finds it. Come now, let us go to the Duchess," continued he, making another effort to disengage himself.

"Or," continued the Banker, without noticing the invitation, "if it didn't suit you to pay, I dare say I could get you a customer for some of those little outlying places of yours, that can be nothing but trouble and loss, and that would help to make matters square."

"Well, then, that will be an affair for Mr. Docket," replied the Duke, always ready to turn matters over to some one else.

"Shall I see Mr. Docket and try to arrange matters with him?" then asked the banker, coming boldly up to the point.

"With all my heart!" replied the Duke, "with all my heart! Mr. Docket and you, I dare say, will soon arrange matters; so now let us go to the Duchess."

The Banker, however, had exhausted his mission and declined; and the Duke, seeing he had pacified him, did not press any further politeness; but, taking leave, handed him over to Mr. Garnett to reconduct to his carriage; who having tucked and buttoned him in gave the word "home!" to the coachman, who forthwith aroused his drowsy horse with a longitudinal cut of his antediluvian whip, and getting him in motion went rumbling out of the courtyard, wondering what they had "all the places se strang for." And the Banker went jolting home, alternately sivin and fouring a speech for Mr. Docket, and building mental villas on the property—Gothic, Doric, Ionic, Dutch, and Chinese.

CHAPTER XL.

MR. DOCKET.

An old Butler of our acquaintance used to say that his master had three sorts of malt liquor—ale, table, and lamentable; and so there may be said to be three sorts of lawyers, able, unable, and lamentable, the latter of course being the black sheep of the profession, of whom it is fortunate there is so small a proportion compared to the white. There is no greater blessing to a country—no more creditable character anywhere—than a peace-making, peace-loving lawyer, one who sacrifices his own interests rather than involve his neighbours in costs and litigation. Unfortunately such men are seldom appreciated until the parties get into the hands of the opposite sort. It may appear strange, but we believe our oft-lauded friends, the railways, have had a good deal to do in repressing the old spirit of litigation and making parties keep the peace together. People fly away from the scene of action, and it is wonderful how insignificant the obnoxious Brown or Jones becomes at the end of a railway ride. Locomotion, with the short costs of the court, which generally entail a loss even on a winner, prevent people fighting about nothing. The Scotch still contend about trifles with the sort of hereditary animosity that made old Lord Eldon inquire whether certain combatants in his court were "first cousins or neighbours in the country?" but the Scotch will soon learn that they can spend their money more profitably in excursion trains and summer trips. Still, as there will always be indifferently honest people in the world, so there will always be lamentable lawyers to aid in carrying out their endeavours. Respectable men will not have anything to do with questionable deeds, so the parties must either take the unable half-wits who will do anything they are told, or men of the lamentable order, whose employment bespeaks the character of the transaction. "Tell me your attorney, and I'll tell you what you are," has almost grown into an adage. So with the bar; dirty men for dirty cases. When that worthy successor of Dan Hakefield—Mr. Verde—begins twiddling his eye-glass, everybody knows there is trickery astir.

Mr. Docket, or Dicky Docket as he was generally called, was one of the dubious order, a legal tool instead of an adviser. He thought it was an honour to be employed by the Duke, who wrote him familiar letters, sealed with great butter-pat-like seals, which of course Dicky was always proud to show or to rehearse the contents of. Though

Dicky had not received the Duke's missive announcing the probable visit of the banker and telling him what to do, when Mr. Goldspink arrived at Dicky's dingy office in the little town of Rackenford, yet he knew quite enough of affairs to entertain the question and endeavour to probe the cautious man's mission. Of course Mr. Goldspink did not open out with his desire to purchase the Garlandale estate, but, harping on the heavy debt due to the bank, he drew one or two other places casually into notice, declaring that though he had a perfect horror of land, which he believed would go down in value, and would rather any one else should purchase than him; yet sooner than things should continue as they then were, he would take a place at a fair price—not a fancy price, but a fair price—such as would give him proper interest for his money; but the places he named being all in strict settlement, and of course as immoveable as rocks, Mr. Docket stopped the unprofitable dialogue as soon as he could by declaring that they were so. The banker then, as he thought most skilfully, worked Garlandale round; but Mr. Docket saw through the hollow device, and immediately proceeded to enhance its attractions, declaring that the Duchess was so attached to it, that he hardly thought the Duke would venture to sell it: at all events, that his Grace would require a very long price; and though they had two stiff glasses of brandy and water together at the Swan Inn, in the course of which the banker brandished the Duke's passbook and Docket expatiated on his Grace's riches, they could not carry the negotiation any further, and our man of money returned pretty much as he came.

Next day, however, brought the following letter from the Duke, explaining matters and telling him what to do. Thus it ran—

"Dear Docket,

"That drivelling old dotard from Mayfield has been over pestering about his little account, and wanting to purchase one of our detached places, and not being able to get rid of the old Philistine I referred him to you, so please, if he comes, squeeze him severely as to price, for, as you know, he has no mercy upon me or on any one else whom he gets into his clutches. He is an ungrateful old curmudgeon, for I sent him a haunch of venison only the other day, and his son used to hunt with my hounds till he found he was safer on foot than on horseback, besides which the bank always charges me full interest up to the day, so that the obligation is really on my side instead of his. However hear what he has to say, and if you can make a good bargain with him do, and let me know the result, but I don't want to be troubled with all the pros and cons.

"Yours truly,

"Tergiversation."

"Richard Docket, Esq.,
"Rackenford."

One of the peculiarities of the present day is that there is no dealing for anything without a haggle. Whatever a person asks it is always inferred that he means to take less, and forthwith the purchaser applies himself to running it down, and this whether or not he considers the article worth the money asked or not. Some do it on principle, some for pleasure, but nine people out of ten do it and think nothing of the waste of time. To say that our Banker did it would be wholly superfluous, but he had better have dispensed with the ceremony, for each time he demurred Mr. Docket added a trifle to the price, till seeing the money mounting up, Mr. Goldspink was obliged to close at a hundred or two more than he might at first have had the estate for. And here leaving the transaction for the present, let us turn to the more invigorating pursuits of country life.

CHAPTER XLI.

NOVEMBER.

People scatter so far and wide, that it is generally November before the country gets established in the full swing of its sporting supremacy. Summer has then fairly abdicated in favour of winter, light clothes have been replaced by warm ones, red coats brought out to air, top-boots reviewed, and *Pater familias* is surprised to find that he cannot read so well by candlelight as he did in the spring. The transition of nature from heat to cold, though slow and gradual at first, becomes fierce and determined afterwards. First goes the sycamore, that cheerful tree of early spring—black spots disfigure its leaves as though there had been a shower of ink. Then the hazel turns yellow, next the beech, then the birch, presently the lime showers off its leaves in volleys, and the yellow ash stands in bold relief against the sturdy oak. The charms of the garden are gone, the flowers look shabby and dull, while bottles of flies and wasps usurp the place of the late blooming peach. A sharp white frost or two, followed by drenching rains, finally settles matters; the oaks turn brown, the rivers flood their banks, the brooks roar, the country is saturated with wet, and ready for hunting.

"Society," as contradistinguished from "company," then commences in the pleasantest easiest form, people asking each other to their houses because it is a convenience to the visitors to come, and not because the host wants to astonish them with his splendour. If there were no other argument in favour of field-sports than the sociality they engender, it would be amply sufficient to carry them through. Contrast a country house, from which there is hunting or shooting, with one where there is nothing to do, and there will not be much doubt about the matter.

The sporting furnishes the chief dish in the bill of fare, and with plenty of good exercise, a good appetite, and good spirits, are sure to be engendered. If there is nothing to do—nothing but eat, eat, eat, a man had better pen himself up in a club, and be stall-fed like an ox. Field-sports should, therefore, be encouraged by every legitimate means, not only for the manly spirit they engender, but on account of the inducement they hold out for a resident gentry. Even if the hunting is not so good as may be got elsewhere, there is nothing like a man hunting from home. Winter is a precarious season, and if the day proves bad, a man at home need not turn out, he has his books or his bills, or his farm, or his something to attend to, whereas, at an inn, or elsewhere, he very likely feels constrained to go, if it is only for the sake of something to do. "Touring" is only for bachelors and men without fixed residences. The family man will find it far cheaper to subscribe to hounds at home than desert his affairs by going away, even though he gets his hunting nominally for nothing. The risk and trouble of travelling, the expenses of the journey, the grumbling of the groom, the discomforts of the inn, to say nothing of the magnitude of the bill, all tend to deter a man from moving. A shooter can put up with a much worse billet than a fox-hunter, because being a summer excursionist he has the fresh air to resort to, while a fox-hunter is housed early in the evening, and must put up with all the nuisances and annoyances so peculiarly the property of the British inn.

Shooting—shooting in moderation at least—is a sport that may be enjoyed almost anywhere. It is not necessary to have an array of keepers, and beaters, and markers, shooting made easy, in fact, for men who have the full use of their limbs, and like to see the sagacity of dogs displayed in the field. As an old writer on hunting once said, "the emulation of leading in hounds and their masters has been the ruin of many a good cry," so as regards shooting, we have often thought that the emulation of making a big bag has been destructive of much quiet rational sport. Every one wants to beat his neighbour in point of numbers, and as everything nowadays finds its way into the papers, a perpetual rivalry is kept up throughout the country. Then the concentration of game attracts the ruffianly poachers, and those deadly conflicts ensue that are so much to be deplored. In a moderately preserved country, where men shoot instead of slaughter, poaching does not pay: at all events, it is carried on in a very limited way, by local men who are well known and easily detected. These are generally the very scum and scourings of the country, men whose least crime is that of poaching; for if a respectable man has a real turn for the trigger, he is speedily engaged as a keeper. The dregs then only remain, skulking fellows lurking about beer-shops, who carry their convictions on their faces, on their backs, on their everything about them. Moderate preserving, therefore, we think should be encouraged,

and the slaughter of the *battue* censured and despised. So much for shooting; now for the nobler pursuit of hunting.

There are few countries now without some approximation to a pack, and the district we are describing possessed the advantage of two, namely, that kept by his Grace the Duke of Tergiversation, and a subscription pack under the auspices of Mr. Jessop, and though neither might draw many strangers from afar, they were yet amply sufficient to keep the natives at home. So, perhaps, the legitimate ends of the Chase were accomplished; those riding over the land to whom it belonged, without subjecting the farmers to irresponsible damage. The Duke's being the oldest pack, of course claim precedence at our hands, and his huntsman being a character, we will devote an introductory chapter to him.

CHAPTER XLII.

MR. JOCK HAGGISH AND THE HOUNDS.

MR. JOCK HAGGISH, or Haggis, as Miss Rosa pronounced it, was a great muckle six foot, sixteen stone, sixty year old, gray-headed, gray-eyed Scotchman, whom the Duke had taken into his service because he got him cheap, and because Jock would turn his hand to anything, which is not the case with English servants generally. Jock could hunt, and he could shoot, or shut as he called it, throw the caber,

put the stone, play the pipes, or dance a reel, and would back himself to catch rats with any one. Moreover, (and this perhaps was one of his recommendations,) he was a great screw, and husbanded the Duke's "siller" as though it were his own. He was continually exclaiming against some piece of extravagance or other. "No more green silk whopcord! no more green silk whopcord! the green silk whopcords cost the Duke *eighteen pence!*" exclaimed he shortly after he entered the Duke's service, bursting into the saddle-room, among all the grooms and helpers, flourishing the terrible document frantically in his hand—and this to men who had always considered that a Duke should pay double for everything.

True, Jock was bad to mount, but then he was a great "e-co-o-nomist" of his horses as well as of the Duke's siller, never leaping if he could possibly circumvent a place. He would stick his great seat of honour against a stiff stake and witherings, and send the whole concern flying into the next field as if it were a bundle of straw. He rode low short-legged dray horse-like animals that would creep or screw or scramble up and down and through, the most cramped impossible looking-places, according as Jock by hand and voice indicated his desire to be doing. At leading over he was quite unique, Jock and his horse hopping over walls or gates or hog-backed stiles together, to the great discomfiture of his followers, who would come up expecting the places were nothing. As to riding for *éclat* or "raputation" as he called it, Jock hadn't the slightest idea of anything of the sort, his notion of a horse being merely as an accessory to enable him to get up and down the "hulls," and keep near to his hounds in the open. Indeed, he never rode up the "hulls" always "leading" like Mr. Briggs did at the Devil's Dyke. Then Jock would come skating straight down with his horse almost on its haunches, leaving long railway-like lines behind him, and nearing the bottom would gradually ease out his horse, and shoot away till he came to some other obstruction.

He had but two horses, a white called Grampian, and a black called Galashiels; but as the Duke let him find his own whips, he never stood upon ceremony in dismounting either of them that happened to be up. Though more of a "Tod" than a fox-hunter, and not caring whether he killed with two couple of hounds or with ten, he yet was uncommonly keen, and rode like fury when there was any occasion.

The want of style, however, did not make much matter with the Duke, for he was a munificent supporter of the chase in everything except the main essentials, viz., hounds, horses, and men. So far as dressing up in an orange-coloured coat, with cherry-coloured linings, collar and cuffs, with a white vest and white kerseymeres, to attend a hunt dinner or ball of an evening, his Grace was quite unexceptionable; but his exit from the smart Queen's-coloured barouche, with the four grays and postilions at the cover

side, savoured more of the foot lights of the theatre than of the appropriate fitness of things so peculiar to fox-hunting. For the morning, the order of things was reversed, the Duke and his field appearing in scarlet coats with yellow collar and cuffs, while Jock and his men sported the orange (plush) with cherry-coloured linings and facings, and the latter's numerical strength was sometimes increased on state occasions by two or three stablemen in plush, without the cherry-coloured facings, who galloped frantically about, taking a sly cut at a hound whenever Jock wasn't near. These, with the Duke himself, were long Jock's great annoyance; but Jock was a free-spoken man, and would "D——" the Duke just as soon as he would anybody else.

Now, however, Jock had got an addition to his troubles in the person of the young Earl of Marchhare whose idea of hunting consisted in riding at all the impossible places he could find. At the most critical moments of the chase, when perhaps the fox had been coursed by a cur, headed by shooter, or the already-failing scent had been rendered less by an impending storm, "Swich, crash, *bang!*" his lordship would come blundering head-formost through some impervious-looking place, right into the middle of the hounds, sending them right and left, laming if not killing one or two. Then Jock would rise in his stirrups and imprecate the "dighted body" as he called him, wishing him at "Jericho beyond Jordan," or some other distant place. What made these performances more unbearable was, that the Duke was extremely parsimonious in the matter of hounds, never letting Jock buy any, though he was welcome to take what he could get in a gift; but as people do not generally give away their best hounds, the assortment was not very select. Still they made a good show at the meet, and with the aid of the extra yellow plush, and the "green silk whop-cord, were kept in tolerable subjection, while the Duke talked and criticised them to his ignorant or obsequious friends in a way that made the long gray locks protruding beneath Jock's black velvet-hunting cap shake with laughter.

The castle company, however, being chiefly composed of distinguished foreigners and parties who did not know or care much more about the matter than the Duke, the exhibition answered very well, and Jock having made the welkin ring with the roar of the hounds, and satisfied the keenness of the cocktails, by the capture of a "ringer" would trot away to a distant cover, leaving a couple of incorrigibles at this farm-house, and a couple at that, until he got himself suited with a somewhat steady pack for his afternoon fox. He would then exercise his Scotch prowess in catching another, unaided by the Duke's instructions, and uninterrupted by the notes of his silver horn. But perhaps the reader would like to have a day with his Grace's hounds, for which purpose we would take a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE FIRST MONDAY IN NOVEMBER.

Though the Duchess was extremely popular, in her own estimation at least, she did not care much to cultivate that quality in the country, relying on her London reputation for carrying her through. With a few exceptions, therefore, she used her country acquaintance merely as auxiliary to her London ones, sending for them when it suited her to have them, and snubbing them when it did not. The consequence was, that unless they were sent for, people did not care much to go, though they always cheerfully responded to a castle invitation of any sort — breakfast, dinner, dancing tea, ball, or what not. Her Grace's impertinence was then placed under the head of "high spirit" —at other times it was censured, and people said they would not go again—nor did they—till the next time.

There not being any notabilities down at the castle, the flag flew on the tower on the first Monday in November, much as it would on the first Monday in May, indicating that the Duke and Duchess were alive, but did not want to be invaded. Of course the hounds figured in the list of appointments in the papers, and at the wonted hour—a quarter to eleven — Jock and whips were seen wending their way with them across the park to the accustomed eagle-winged cedars on the right of the castle, the orange coats of the men contrasting with the rich green tint of the trees. The landscape was presently further enlivened by the arrival of sundry scarlet and dark-coated equestrians, when the usual greetings and compliments were exchanged, followed by the usual recognition of hounds and identification of horses.

"What! the old bay still going? Declare I didn't know the dun mare since she was clipped—good for another season I guess."

There was no hospitality used, not even a horn of ale or a bit of bread and cheese, the Duke never doing anything unless he over-did it. When Baron Bumperhausen and suite were at the castle in the spring, there was such indiscriminate profusion that all the grooms and helpers got drunk on hock and sparkling moselle. Mr. Haggish, however, was thankful that it was a banyan day, for, though no tee-totaler himself, he had a great abhorrence of drinking, and always got rid of any "crittur" about him that could no keep itself sober. Besides, he thought the Duke's siller could be a deal better em-

ployed than in making all the people about fou." "What the davil's the use of comin' out to hunt if you want to drink!" he would exclaim, as he saw a party of sots wheeling off to a public-house. "Drinking and hunting are twar men's works! Drinking and hunting are twar men's works!" he would continue, trotting briskly on with the hounds in hopes of finding and getting away with his fox before they came up again.

And now the green-coated red-vested Mr. Bagwell the pompous keeper, comes swaggering up with his gun on his leather-capped shoulder, in the supercilious sort of way these gentlemen do before hounds, as though they were the real boys for finishing the foxes. No circumlocution about keepers, cock, snap, *bang*, and he's over and "under," perhaps before anybody knows anything about the matter. Bagwell and Jock of course are at variance, Jock thinking, and not unjustly, that the keeper is not altogether fair to the foxes. Their greetings are therefore brief and distant, with the usual amplitude of "Mister"—Mister Bagwell, Mister Haggish, for servants are always very respectful to each other. Mister Bagwell wants to know where Mister Haggish is going to draw, in order that he may look out for cock, to which Mister Haggish replies with a waive of the arm, "A, arl oboot, arl aboot." This answer not conveying much information, Mr. Bagwell grounds his gun, adjusting his broad gold-laced hat on his carrotty head, sticks out his new leather-gaitered legs and proceeds to criticise the hounds to Mr. Morris the mole-catcher, who happens to be by. "Seen a brighter coated lot, Mr. Morris, you and oi," observes he, after a searching scrutiny. Mr. Morris says nothing, for he doesn't want to rile Jock—who is very handy with his fists. He then tries Gripper the horse-breaker, who is introducing a chestnut filly to the hounds, but meets with no better success from him. "Dry meet this, Mr. Stubbings," continues he, nothing daunted, now addressing the newly arrived half-drunken cow-doctor, whose rubicund nose gives promise of sympathy—"Dry meet," repeats he, adding, "this usen't to be the way at the castle."

"Far batter for your halth!" exclaims Jock, now shaking with vexation, "far better for your halth."

"Well, but a glass would do one no harm," replied Stubbings, drily.

"Yas it would" replied Jock, "Yas it would; one glass begats another, till ye keep glass, glass, glassin all day," adding with a furious crack of his cords with his fist, "I hate that glassin! Why the davil can't men stop at home and get their glasses. Halth and contantment say I, before all the glasses i' the world!"

The temperance discussion is now interrupted by a cloud of equestrians—red and black coats commingling with habits appearing in the distance, and advancing rapidly towards the hounds. All eyes turn in that direction, and speculation is rife as to who the ladies are.

One says they are the Miss Beauchamps of Somerville Tower, another the Dingwalls of Butcley, a third the Bedfords of Weston; but none of them guessed that they were the pretty Miss Springfields of Freelands Lawn, accompanied by their plain cousin, Mrs. Sparrow, playing propriety for Captain Ambrose Lightfoot, and young Mr. Netherwood of Viewforth House, who are making up to the ladies. However, on they come, speaking or chattering for themselves, and scarcely have they got the salutations returned, and their horses' heads loosened, before a further reinforcement takes place, in the persons of the two Mr. Woodrosses of Dandley, Mr. Young of Helmsley, and Mr. Leyland Langford of Lesdale. Then high change commences, the ladies are complimented on their looks, the horses on their condition, and everything promises well for the day. Inquiries are made after the Duke and Duchess, and the usual answer received—their Graces quite well. Then, "are they coming?" "Can't tell, believe the Duke is;" in the course of which inquiry farmer Freeman trots up on his pony, and the Union Doctor stops for a stare. Mr. Haggish moves the hounds to and fro on the circumscribed spot, and the whips make as much noise as they dare with Jock so near.

But who comes here with her flowing robe almost brushing the dew off the green sward as her light-actioned white pony tit ups gaily along, the rider's mauve-coloured neck-tie fluttering on the light breeze. "Who can it be?" asks one, "Who have we here!" exclaims another, shading the sun from his eyes with his hand. Gentle reader you know, because you have seen horse and rider before, though under somewhat different circumstances, namely in the clothes basket, going into Mayfield. Yes, it is Miss Rosa; Rosa on the same pretty white pony, now clipped and looking all the better for the operation; Rosa dressed in the neatest of habits, and the prettiest of hats, with a beautiful well tagged fox's brush curling gracefully round the crown. As she advances, she gradually reins in her steed, and at length approaches the pack at a walk. Hats and caps then rise in her honour, after which the parties compose themselves for a stare.

A sporting parson once asked his bishop if he thought there "would be any harm in his hunting?" to which his lordship replied, "He did not think there would, provided the parson didn't tally ho;" and Miss Rosa would seem to have taken somewhat similar counsel, for she occasionally shows when the meet is near home, without professing to follow the hounds. The gallantry of the gentlemen, however, especially of those who don't like risking their necks, is so great that she generally gets piloted about through farm onsteads, down bye lanes, along rising ground, in a way that enables her to see quite as much as a good many aspiring youths who aggravate themselves and their horses into a lather. So after Larkspur has been riding at Hopkins, and Buckler or Burstem at Cramner, taking the most improvident places, and thinking to have shaken off all the field, just as those con-

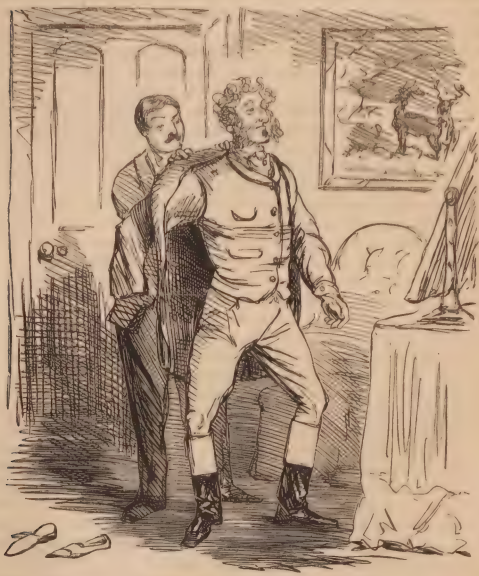
founded cross roads intervene, and Haggish's hand is high in the air, praying for "silence," Miss comes spurting down a green siding, having seen all the fun from afar. Then Jack having hit off the scent at a mouse, gives one of his unmistakable yells, and forthwith the scramble is renewed and away they all go as before. It was after one of these circuitous performances, in which she was gallantly led by Lord Lovedale, that the gay brush we now see responding to her movements superseded the rigid pheasant's wings then in her hat. Still she is not a fox-hunter, only a young lady who occasionally goes to the meet to see the hounds throw off, and such is her errand on the present occasion. The old gentleman in the snuff-coloured coat, with the drab shorts and gaiters, on the high ewe-necked bay mare, is the groom-gardener now in attendance on the beauty. She does not come into the crowd like the Miss Springfields, who are mounted on full-sized horses, but hovers on the margin as though she may be going on to the Castle, or only taking advantage of a ride in the park on this an open privileged day. Still the Miss Springfields think it very bold of her coming in that unprotected way without any *chaperone*, and are glad they have enlisted cousin Sparrow in their service. Miss Bertha is much consoled by Captain Lightfoot declaring that he does not think anything of Rosa. If he does not, however, others do, and she presently becomes what the elegant writers term the cynosure of all eyes, as she puts her pretty little pony about.

But come, it is nearly twelve o'clock, and the unpunctual Duke of Tergiversation, having at length got all his letters read and papers skimmed—home news, foreign news, fashionable intelligence—and himself installed in a spic and span new scarlet coat, with orange-coloured collar and cuffs, though his last year's coat was not a quarter worn out, thinks he may as well take a little horse-exercise and show himself to the country, if he does nothing more. So sending his valet to announce to the Earl of Marchhare's valet that he is ready, he puts on a shiny new hat, and proceeds towards the grand staircase, where he is presently joined by his equally glossy son.

Though we said that the Duke was still young and curly, we omitted to mention whether his curls were dark or light, or indeed to give any general description of his person; and as this may be as convenient a place for drawing his portrait as any, we will deviate for a brief space to introduce it.

Lord Marchhare may be considered in a manner as sitting for his likeness too, for he is the exact duplicate of his noble father, with the exception of being dark like the Duchess, instead of fair like the Duke. First, then, for the father. His Grace is of a good person, rather above the middle size, with a handsome, well-whiskered oval face, enlivened with pleasant blue eyes and an engaging smile, well calculated to throw a stranger off his guard. His conversation is agreeable, his manners free and easy, and his flattery delicate and

insinuating. In fact, for cozening or moulding men to his mind, the Duke has not his equal anywhere, and is not at all scrupulous what



he asks people to do. As we said before, he considers that every one has his price. Take the same sized man, but of course slighter, for the Earl, with dark hair and dark eyes instead of light hair and light eyes, with moustache and imperial instead of imperial only, and a voluble tongue attuned to talk nonsense, and a fair idea may be formed of the two.

Let us now get them mounted.

"Well, Marchhare, I suppose we should be going," said the Duke, drawing on a pair of clean white doe-skin gloves as they met on the landing preparatory to making a descent to their horses. "This is the first day," added he, "and people will expect us to be punctual."

"Which we shall not be," observed the Earl, producing his watch and showing that it wanted a few minutes to twelve.

"Ah, well, never mind, first day," rejoined the Duke, "gives people time to look over the hounds. Dare say Mr. Haggish will manage to amuse them."

They then accomplished the descent of the broad staircase, and were met in the inner entrance by an overpowering phalanx of servants—men out of livery, men in livery—men in half-livery, some with their whips, some with their sandwiches, some with their sherry, who escorted them to the great doors, which were thrown open as if Daniel Lambert himself were coming, and disclosed the sheeted horses waiting for their riders. These were presently run up under the vestibule; one man holds a horse's head, another a stirrup, while a third sweeps the clothing over the tail, and father and son are presently in their saddles, apparently to their mutual satisfaction. Stirrups are felt and approved, reins drawn, and away they go, the Duke on a gray, the Earl on a bay. The doors are then closed, the late obsequious household then run for their hats, liveries are exchanged for *mufti*; housemaids in hoops expand their parasols, and a pedestrian party presently emerges from the Castle.

And now, as the great men approach the pack, respectful demeanour begins to simmer and gradually boils up into a general irruption of politeness—hats and caps go off simultaneously, Mr. Bagwell's gold laced hat making as fine an aërial sweep as any of them.

"I thought your Grace was no coomin," observed Jock, replacing his black cap on the straggling gray locks of his big bald head. "I was just agoing to throw off without ye," added he.

"Oh, come, I was sure to come," replied the Duke; "never miss a day if I can possibly help it—only affairs of State must be attended to," his Grace looking round on his satellites as he spoke to see whom he should recognise specifically. "Good morning, Young!" "How are you, Mr. Field?" "Hope you are well, Mr. Langdale?" fine hunting day, Mr. Netherwood," honouring him with a shake of the hand and an inquiry after his parents. Meanwhile Lord Marchhare takes a survey of the fair, shakes hands with the Miss Springfields, and hopes Mrs. Sparrow is well and all the little Sparrows, whose name is "legion." And here we may mention that Lord Marchhare's other foible, besides breaking his neck, was breaking his heart. He was constantly falling in love with some adorable creature, from whose delicious poison there was no cure, save getting him another charmer. If he had been of age he would have had to stand a dozen breaches of promise actions, or compromise them on the usual uncomfortable principle of being the offender. The law does not consider that the lady can make the advances, though perhaps a jury of matrons might find the reverse. Be that, however, as it may, lady had succeeded lady very rapidly, and these belonging more to the aristocracy of usefulness

than the aristocracy of birth; and as no woman, however humble, who has seen the popular pantomime of Cinderella, but thinks she herself might be manufactured into a duchess, so our noble friend, if he will allow us to call him so, had caused ideal coronets to spring up very promiscuously. His Lordships present *liaison* was Miss Wrigglesworth the milliner, of Tillingford, a lady of great personal attractions, though somewhat his senior, an advantage that she knew how to turn to account. She was a dark haired, dark eyed, spacious, well hooped woman, a great contrast to little Clara Brown the baker's daughter, of Maplehurst, whom she had supplanted. But mark the fickleness of man! No sooner had Miss Rosa disclosed her pearly teeth with a smile, in return for his Lordship's upraised hat, than away went Wrigglesworth, hoops and all.

A clever woman knows when she has hit her man, just as well as Bagwell knows when he has hit his bird; and as his lordship turned his horse inside her pony to accompany her in the now onward movements of the hounds, she felt a sort of thrill of "Marchharcishness" come over her, and the glittering flag, and the sun-bright panes of the lofty castle, seemed to beckon her to its towers; she shook out her habit and re-adjusted her seat with delight. His lordship who had a voluble well-hung tongue, opened out with great vehemence and glee; praised her hat and her habit and her pony and her appearance generally. Indeed, the Duke who saw what was going on, rather wished that he had kept to Miss Wrigglesworth, who he would be less likely to marry than a girl like Miss Rosa.

However, like a sensible man he kept that to himself, knowing that opposition sometimes promotes what is meant to prevent. His Grace of course, wished to see his son marry a lady who would bring something more into the family than her petticoats and her pedigree as his Duchess had done, and had submitted many great heiresses to his son's notice, who however had all been declined on the score of want of looks —good looks were a *sine quâ non* with the Earl. However, the Duke hopes for the best, and trots on between the Miss Springfields as if there was nothing whatever disturbing his mind. Thus they pass through the home farm-yard, under the right wing of the castle, and are presently at the decoy on the north side, which is always drawn first. What with various supplementary detachments, the field may now number some forty or fifty horsemen of one sort and another.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TALLY HO!

OOI in there!" cries Jock, as the hounds reach the south end of the decoy, and at the accustomed sound they desert his horse's heels, and proceed, each leisurely in his line, to draw through the moss, and reeds, and sedges, splashing and jumping and picking their way as they go. It is not a usual find (unless Bagwell has arranged matters beforehand), but the "ladies" in the castle like to see the sight, and now throng the terrace for the purpose. And very pretty the scene is with the rich varied evergreens, enlivened with the rich varied hues of the hunters, the cheer of the huntsman, the screams of the ducks, with the awe-stricken deer forming in groups among the browning ferns on the undulating hills in the distance, wondering if the commotion is directed against them.

"Twang, twang, twang," presently goes Jock's horn; *tweet, tweet, tweet,* goes the Duke's, for he likes to have a blow no matter why, and often aggravates Jock by its use. But the Duke is a man who thinks he has an instinctive knowledge of everything, and has only to take up a subject to become a professor. Out the hounds come at the duplicate summons, and Jock having got the majority of them around him, feels great Grampian gently with his spur and trots briskly away, crying, "cop, come away, cop, come away," to the hounds as he goes. He then gets them well in advance of the field, being always "das-

paratcly afraid" lest any of the horses should tread on their tails. The field then mingle promiscuously, red coats with black, and black with rustic drab, the Earl still adhering to the fair lady on the pony which seems as lively as her mistress. So they go past the keeper's lodge, round Newfield hill, and over Stebbing's Bridge to Branchley.

The warren is the next draw; but Bag having the rabbits for his perquisite, takes care not to harbour any "vermin," however there is no harm in running the hounds through, and the line lies past a series of most inviting park hurdles, which Lord Marchhare always makes a point of jumping as he goes. His dark eyes sparkle as he approaches the first flight, and pointing them out to Miss Rosa with his whip, he draws his horse together and shoots him over like an arrow from a bow. He then pulls him up on the far side, and wheeling about charges the reverse way, Miss of course expressing her trepidation, by a slightly suffused eyelid which is not lost upon his lordship as he returns to her side. He thinks she is extremely pretty and great Miss Wrigglesworth is altogether eclipsed by the wearer of the fox-brushed hat. He won't ride over any more rails if she wishes him not. And of course she does wish him not.

Hark! What's that? Tally ho! so it is, and already Haggish has his white horse by the head, and is striving over the green sward to get to the place. It's Will Ranger, the under keeper's voice, who has just shook a bag fox, a regular Leadenhall gentlemen, down in Knotty-Ash Glen, and after hiding the sack, and viewing him away, is making as much noise as he can to delude people into the belief that he's a wild one. Every body is now suddenly seized with a spurt of activity, the Duke gets out his horn and blows most profusely, the yellow whips holloo and crack their whips, though every hound is away, caps are adjusted, and hats thrust down upon brows, and Bagwell hurries up the Obelisk Hill for a view, as though he had never seen the fox before. As he goes he loses the invoice for him out of his pocket.

And now the hurricane of hounds get to the place, and old black faced Rummager, with a vigorous dash to the point, hits off the scent with a yell, which the body of the pack endorse, and away they go up the echoing glen with a roar, the reverberating hills seemingly take pleasure in repeating the sound. Now the leading hounds reach the lowering banks of the end of the glen, and a slight overshoot occurs, the fox having changed his mind on viewing the wide-stretching water meadows in front so unlike his late confined residence in London, and has popped back into cover below the shelving rocks by the brook.

Ranger, however, being there with his whip to confront him, the fox again turns tail, and puts his head to the formidable unknown open, going in that confused zigzag sort of way that makes a huntsman doubt whether he is after a fox or a hare. It must be a hare! No

Fugleman speaks! It must be a fox! and Jock cheers the pack on the line.

For a lawn meet perhaps a bag fox answers a better purpose than a wild one, for he shows in so many places that a wild one would avoid as greatly to increase the excitement of his followers. There is nothing so exhilarating as a view of the fox. It converts the field into a sort of Joint Stock Company on the limited liability principle, no one being obliged to go further than he likes. So it was on the present occasion. As Lord Marchhare piloted his fair charge along the brow of the undulating Martindale hills, with Jock cheering on his hounds in the green water-shining valley below, his lordship viewed the fox stealing round the middle of Canonridge hill, with his old enemies the crows, too plainly denoting his line.

"Y-o-onder he goes!" cried his lordship, pointing him out to the lady. "Y-o-onder he goes! a regular flyer!"

"Where?" asked Miss Rosa, straining her pretty blue eyes in the direction of Gilden Clump, instead of Canonridge Hill.

"There! there! just where the sheep are—now you see them running!" exclaimed his lordship. "The fox is above them!"

"Oh, I see!" replied Miss Rosa, with increased animation, "I see, just crossing the green by the gate;" so saying, she got her pony by the head, and touching him lightly with her gold-mounted whip, scuttled after her excited leader as fast as it could lay its little legs to the ground. The consequence was, they crossed the line of the fox on the Warden and Lancroft Road, and brought the hounds to a momentary standstill, thereby causing a general objurgation of their followers from Jock as he came bustling up the hill on the line. Having, however, pretty well settled in his mind what he was after, he swung the hounds boldly to the left, to give the fox a little more law, and then let them make their own cast, despite the entreaties of the field to get them on to Horner's Mill, from whence the fox had been seen to cross to Nunfield House. Jock, however, pretended to think otherwise, at all events, he inclined to let the hounds make it out for themselves. Not that it is a case of long concealment, for confinement has made the poor animal carry his own condemnation, and Trumpeter and Rallywood flinging well in advance, proclaim the line with most unmistakable energy. Away they all score to cry, now Trumpeter leading, now Tuneable, and presently Pilot, making direct for the mill, then over the water meadows, and so on by the gravel-pits up to the hill, on which the fox was viewed—the line extremely comfortable, with bridle-gates and grass belts on the ploughed fields. No occasion for leaping, though, if his lordship had not been so pleasantly engaged, he would have found occupation for his horse among the high stone walls of the hill enclosures. As it is, he cheers Miss Rosa along, promising her the brush if they kill. It is not, however, quite killing time yet, for a light breeze helps poor reynard down

wind, and fear and freedom lend a little impetus to his cramped limbs. Still he runs bewildered; and instead of making for the main earths at Kesterton Rocks, as a native would have done, he turns short on the far side of Canonridge Hill, and retraces his steps on the other side. This *détour* would have been convenient for some in a hard run, but where little Snowdrop is going at her ease, there is no want of breathing time.

When people don't know a country, and some never learn one, a twisting run is as good as a straight one, and Lord Marchhare being one of the innocent order, he kept piloting Miss Rosa carefully through gates and other shirking conveniences believing they were having a capital thing. Meanwhile the hounds go tearing and screeching along, every one with a scent, each striving and racing to be first. Jock keeps hollowing them on, hoping they will make as much of the run as will prevent the majority of the field wanting another. So he lets the hounds cast, and fling, and feather, and do all the work for themselves, though he could have put an immediate stop to the performance by a lift if he liked. Thus they go most jovially down Summerland's banks, skirting Tangleton brake, on to Copsewood House and Alum Hill, the fox very little before them, and each moment making that little less. The persecution now becomes too intense, for not only are three-and-twenty couple of great frantic fox-hounds, and two squeaking ignominious terriers leagued against him, but every clown and cur dog in the country makes common cause, as though he had been the abductor of all the geese, turkeys, and hens instead of never having been within a hundred miles of their hen-roosts before. "Here he is!" "Yonder he goes!" "Hoop! hoop! Tally ho! Tally ho!" "Have at him, Towler! good dog!" greet him at every point, until baffled and stupid he totters and rolls into an adjoining hedge-row, The pushing pack overrun the scent, a momentary lull ensues, quickly followed by a lusty "who-hoop!" as Novice and Traveller return to the spot and dispatch him. Its Jock's death-knell, who, hearing the fatal "cranch," throws himself from his horse, and comes tearing through an apparently impracticable boundary fence composed of blackthorn and whitethorn entwined with honeysuckle and ivy—the blind ditch full of the luxuriance of rank grass and fern. Through it Jock tears, regardless of scratches, but the sight of such an obstacle is too great for the "Arl," as Jock calls his lordship, who hustling his horse, sends him at it full tilt, and landing with his fore-feet in the ditch, shoot his lordship well over his head into the next field. Rosa shrieked, as she saw by the undue elevation of the horse's tail what had happened, a very different expression to what was elicited from Jock, who exclaimed, as he saw his young master regaining his legs after his headforemost flight, "A! what's the dighted body loupen at!" and immediately proceeded to handle his fox. His lordship, however, being used to Jock's politeness, and

also quick on his legs, is at his now staring horse by the time Jock has extricated his fox from the hounds, when remounting, he "at" the fence a little lower down, and taking it on and off, returned handsomely to the place from whence he came. Miss Rosa having brushed the rising tears from her eyes, returns her well-ciphered lace-fringed 'kerchief to the saddle-pocket just as Jock struggles back through the formidable fence with his fox, followed by the now baying clamorous pack, rushing and pushing, and nearly upsetting him as he goes.

The fox is then thrown carelessly on the green sward, the mortuary circle is formed, hounds and pedestrians in the middle, equestrians outside, and as Jock whips off the brush, a sort of general impeach-

ment of the fox's morality is made, Billy Buckwheat declaring that he is the identical thief that stole all their hens, while Tom Thistlewaite vows that he could swear to the rascal among a thousand. Thinks he just sees him now carrying off a turkey on his back. So, on the principle of giving a dog a bad name and hanging him, they give the fox a bad one and eat him. While the pack are contending for the unsavoury remains, Headstrong wrangling with Hostile for a haunch, and Pillager

chasing Luckylass for a leg, Lord Marchhare, having dismounted, possessed himself of the brush, and drawn it to and fro through his Frangipane-scented cambric 'kerchief, proceeds to present to Miss Rosa, regretting that the one in her pretty hat prevents him the pleasure of placing it there, but praying to be allowed to decorate her pony, whereupon with the aid of a piece of string he fastens it into the headstall, declaring that she looked quite charming, and worthy of being painted. And Miss Rosa simpered and smiled, and felt thoroughly delighted; was so glad that the Miss Springfield's were there to see. And the Miss Springfields curled up their noses, and wondered she had not put the brush in her hat along with the other one. This having completed the ceremony, his lordship and the rest of the dismounted ones resume their horses, and the Duke turning to Jock asks what he "will do next?"

"A, what your Grace pleases," replied Jock, well knowing what would suit the Duke best.

"Another run would please me most," repled his Grace, "but where to get one's the thing."

"Why, we maun just trot on to Lighthorn bushes," replied Jock, "its na use potterin' on about Trouble-hill or Twycross banks."

"Why not?" asked the Duke.

"Why not? retorted Jock, angrily, "Why not? why, because they've bin and stole all the foxes! Stole all the foxes, as I'm a livin' man! There's no greater folly than folks buying foxes—very likely buying their own back again. Soon come to havin' their fox and their fish down by the same train. However, if your Grace thinks we can do any good nearer nor the bushes we had better go and see, for the day's fast spending, and the nights begin to be longer than they were," Jock hoisting his great self on to Grampian as he spoke. He then called his hounds together, and, without waiting for orders, cleared them of the crowd, and trotted briskly away, feeling pretty sure that the Duke would not follow.

Jock was right; for the Duke, after looking at his watch, thought he had taken as much exercise as would insure him an appetite for dinner; and suddenly recollecting that he had a great arrear of letters to write, he reined in his horse, while those who were going with the hounds passed onwards, and those who, like himself, had had enough, turned away, and dispersed right and left. And Miss Rosa being rejoined by old gaiters, smiled a sweet adieu to the Earl, and was presently cantering homewards with the gay trophy nodding merrily over pony's nose. Jock, with a choice few, then trotted off to the bushes, and effaced the recollection of the bagman by a chivey after a wild fox which finally beat him at dusk.

CHAPTER XLV.

MISS ROSA'S RETURN.

"WELL, Mamma, and what do you think of this?" exclaimed Miss Rosa, riding her pony over the trim lawn up to the open bay window

of the drawing-room, where sat her Mamma enjoying the last lingering sunshine of the incomparable Comet summer.

"O Rosa, my love, I'm so glad you've got back!" exclaimed her parent, rising from her little work-table and hurrying up to the window.

"Well Mamma, and what do you think of this?" repeated Miss Rosa, putting her pony's head straight before her.

"Of what?" asked Mamma, not seeing what she meant.

"Of this," said Miss Rosa, pointing with her tiny whip to the decoration on the pony's head.

"What, another!" exclaimed Mrs. McDermott, with unfeigned surprise; "well, whose is it this time?"

Miss Rosa (archly)—"Guess."

"Well, the Duke, perhaps," suggested Mamma, after a pause, seeing by her daughter's face it was some one she was proud of.

"Guess again!" exclaimed she, with increased glee.

"Well then, Lord Marchhare," replied Mamma, now naming the gentleman she was inclined to do at first.

"*Lord Marchhare it was*," replied Miss Rosa, with due emphasis—*Lord Marchhare it was*," repeated she, "fastened it into Snowdrop's head with his own hands."

"Indeed," smiled Mamma, evidently not thinking so much of the triumph as her daughter.

"Fastened it with his own hands, Mamma, before the Miss Springfields and a whole host of other people—Captain Lightfoot, and I don't know who else."

"That was nice," rejoined Mamma, still fearing the compliment would not lead to a coronet. "I'm glad you went, for it has been a beautiful day, and the country must have been charming."

"Well, but about the brush! Don't you think it was very nice?" asked Miss Rosa, patting her pony.

"Oh, very nice," replied Mamma; "only I hope you didn't show you thought so?"

"Certainly not," retorted Miss Rosa, bridling up—"certainly not—I'm not quite so unused to civility as that."

"And how did the Duke seem to take it?" asked Mamma, after a pause.

"Oh, the Duke was quite affable and agreeable—didn't seem to think it anything uncommon."

"Ah, I'm afraid that would be the case," rejoined Mamma; "he would look upon it as one of his lordship's matters of course."

"Oh, you *do* so like to tease me," retorted Rosa, jerking her elbows.

"No, my dear, indeed I don't," replied Mrs. McDermott, calmly; "only you know it's well to look at the case in all its bearings."

"Bearings! my dear Mamma, there are no bearings! I only said Lord Marchhare rode about with me, and gave me the brush when we killed."

"Oh, rode about with you, did he?" replied Mamma; "well, that 's more like the thing."

"Yes, regularly chaperoned me," rejoined the somewhat pacified Miss; "told me what to take and what to avoid. In fact, if it hadn't been for him, I should not have stayed for the run. He kept coaxing me on, and on, and on, till at last we came to a finish by killing."

Mamma—"And then he put the fox's brush in your bridle."

Rosa—"Yes, he couldn't well do it before," continued she, laughing, "because the fox was wearing it himself, you know."

"I see," said Mrs. McDermott, who had now mastered the whole story—find, flurry, finish, flirtation, and all.

"Well, I'm sure I'm glad to see you safe back, my dear," continued Mamma, eyeing her pretty daughter regardfully. "I began to be uneasy about you, only I thought you might have gone to the castle."

"Castle! There was no 'castle' to-day," replied Rosa; "nobody out but the Duke and my lord."

"No Duchess?" asked Mrs. McDermott.

"No Duchess," replied Rosa, with a shake of her head—"heard nothing about her, in fact—she doesn't show, you know, unless she has company, or there is some one she thinks it worth her while being civil to. No poor little me, you know, nor yet the Miss Springfields, nor yet Cousin Sparrow."

"Well, never mind, my dear, you've done very well," replied the satisfied parent, "you've done very well. So now put up your pony, and let us have dinner; for you must be hungry, and it is long past the hour, and cook will be cross, and it's no use making her angry about nothing, you know." So saying, Mrs. McDermott closed the half-opened ground-reaching window, and Rosa turning her pony about, trotted away to deliver it up to old Gaiters at the stable. That worthy, having housed his own horse, had rushed into the house as well to refresh his frame with a draught of mild ale, as to tell the establishment the wonderful events of the day. How the Earl had selected their young lady to ride with, how he had led her through the country, and finally, given her the brush; a piece of intelligence that was presently confirmed by our heroine re-entering by the back way, bearing the trophy triumphantly in her hand. And the conversation both in kitchen and parlour that evening took a very ambitious coronetted turn, the maids all going for the greatness, while Mrs. Gaiters, who had seen something of life, took the more moderate hope-for-the-best tone.

CHAPTER XLVI.

SIVIN AND FOUR AGAIN.

Money, money, money, being our rich man's sole end and aim, he was as cunning in getting it as a rat-catcher is at getting the rats to take his traps. Moreover, he had been tried in so many different ways,—bad bills, middling bills, forged bills, bad securities, middling securities, no securities—that he fancied himself half a lawyer, and talked and argued as if he were a whole one. This being a sort of character that a real lawyer does not like, our friend had been bowed out by independent practitioners and had now taken refuge under the pliant ignorance of young Mr. Saplington, who did his private business for nothing, in consideration of what he got out of the bank for writing —"on or before letters," issuing latitats and missives of the forcing imperative order. Our Banker, indeed, would seem to have a natural relish and appreciation for the law, for whenever he got a bundle of title-deeds into his possession, he would set-to and read every document from end to end, no matter how mouldy or musty, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy their dreary headaching contents. Then, having them once into his clutches, no power on earth could induce him to let them go out of his sight until he got his money repaid. Saplington might come and copy them in his little den at the bank for anybody wanting to know their contents, but no taking away even to Saplington's office, and as soon as the dinner hour came, back they were bundled into the tin box, the Bramah lock replaced, and the whole returned to the vast abyss of the strong iron safe. Many thousand acres of land had been compressed within its solid sides, many cornstacks, many haystacks, many flocks and herds, many horses and implements of husbandry.

With a man so exact, even in a loan, with all the circumjacent contrivances to protect him, it is needless to say that in an out-and-out purchase he was consistently cautious, and Docket and he having at length got a deal, and the difficulty of the case might be thought to be over, lo and behold! it would seem to be only beginning, just as in matrimony, the difficulties are often all to come to, after the parties themselves think everything is smoothly settled, and are announcing the fact to their already well-aware friends.

Mr. Goldspink would seem to have conjured up all the blots and defects of all the titles he and his predecessors had ever had through

their hands since the establishment of the bank in sivinteen hundred and sivinty-four, and to have invested Garlandale with the whole of them. Like Gil Blas's mule, the title would seem to be all faults. The consequence was that he made Mr. Saplington put so many points and doubts, and queries, and draw his attention to so many things, that Mr. James Habendum, the conveyancer of the Temple, naturally concluded the Banker was an unwilling purchaser, wanting to be off his bargain. Now it so happened that the title was singularly clear, twist it as he would, Mr. Habendum could make nothing against it—nothing fatal at least—for it must be a marvellous title that a keen-nosed lawyer cannot take some exceptions to, but the evident anxiety of the party made him set his best wits to work to try if he could accommodate him, when he hit upon the following instance of the beautiful simplicity of our real property laws.

There had been a trust-money mortgage on the estate some forty years before, and between the time of making the mortgage and paying it off a new trustee, one Mr. Cracknel Cauldfield, had been appointed, which enabled Mr. Habendum to suggest that unless the death of the original trustee and the due appointment of his successor could be shown, the money (notwithstanding the surviving trustee joined in the receipt) might have been wrongly paid, and an intending purchaser might have to pay it over again—and this, after the lapse of the forty years, during which no claim for either principal or interest had ever been made; and Mr. Habendum further played as he thought into the Banker's hands by saying that unless the vendor could show all this, a Court of Equity would not enforce the performance of the contract. The Banker was appalled when he read the opinion. It would have done Mr. Habendum good to have seen how he took it. "Sivin and four's clivin!" exclaimed he to Mr. Saplington as that gentleman presented him in his little den at the bank with what he too thought would be an agreeable document, "Sivin and four's clivin and eighty-four is ninety-five, and a underd-and-one is a underd and ninety-six. Why this is indeed a tremendious announcement!—a lamentable discovery! Thought the title seemed as clear as the sun at noon-day, and here have I gone and told Mrs. Goldspink and she has told Mrs. Wedlock, and Mrs. Wedlock will have told Mrs. Sinney, and it will be all over the town that I've bought the estate, and now I haven't got it. Oh dear! Oh dear!" continued he, wringing his fat hands in despair, "one should never holla without leave of the lawyers!" so saying, he sunk into the old hard-seated semi-circular chair in which he had spent so much time, and calculated so much agreeable money.

Presently he became more composed, and looked at the matter in a different light. "Sivin and four's clivin," said he, crossing his fat legs and dry-shaving his chin, and "forty-one is fifty-two; it's lucky praps that things have turned out as they have done. If I had set-to

and built a messuage, tenement, or dwelling-house, with the appurtenances, and just as I got my carpets cut, and all on the square, this horrid old Cracknel Cauldfield had cast up from the continent, from Holland, or Flushing, or wherever he has been hiding, demanding the whole in the name of the Queen, or of Sir Alexander Cockburn, Baronet, at Westminster, I should have been in a pretty predicament; wholly, entirely, completely ruined." Mr. Saplington then essayed to pacify him by pointing out that Mr. Goldspink would not lose the estate, but would only have to pay the mortgage money over again; whereupon the banker seized upon the unfortunate word "only," and worked it in a way that plainly showed he did not think it any trifle paying for a place twice over.

At length, having let off his vehemence, he began to take matters in a more amiable mood; and, now, for the first time, enlightened Mr. Saplington with the fact that he really wanted to buy the estate, and was not nibbling at it as an investment, or for the sake of covering a loan, and though he could not think of touching without the flaw being removed, he instructed Mr. Saplington to inform Mr. Docket that he should expect Mr. Docket to produce Mr. Cracknel Cauldfield dead or alive, to clear up the mystery about the money. And the lawyer having taken his departure, the Banker added another doubt to his long list of legal difficulties.

Wouldn't he take care for the future to see that trustees were properly appointed! He would take nothing for granted. No, not even that he had a nose on his face without seeing it. And the inviting smell of roast goose now invading his den, our friend locked the opinion up in his safe, and proceeded to the discussion of more agreeable matters.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MR. TOM TAILINGS.

E mentioned incidentally that our hero, Mr. Jasper Goldspink, had a sporting chum, the ostler's son at the Bear and Ragged Staff Inn, at Mayfield, and coming performances requiring that he should be more specifically introduced, we will here take the liberty of doing so. His name was Tailings, Mr. Thomas Tailings, son of the bow-legged old ostler, who had fairly worn off his cow-lock by touching it for elcemosynary shillings and sixpences, for hoisting half-drunken farmers and others on to their horses. Old Tom had a good strain of sporting blood in his nerves, being a son of the well-known old Tailings, the ostler at the Eclipse Inn at Easingwold, in the palmy days of "eight out and four in;" and though Tailings, the father, had never been able to recreate his sporting propensities as he could wish, yet he was right glad to see "wor Tom," as he called his son, in a better position, more particularly as the pursuit brought him in money, and caused him to rise from the obscurity of fustian into the smart bow-legged swell, whiffing his cigar, with his dirty-nailed hands deeply ensconsed in his well puckered peg-top trouser pockets, so familiar to turfites on a variety of race-courses. Notwithstanding the garnish of dress, however, there is still the same manifest likeness between Tailings the father, and Tailings the son, as there is between Her Most Gracious Majesty's profile on a half-crown, and Her Most Gracious Majesty's profile on a half-penny; the same square Tailings face, the same Tailings pug nose, the same little ferrety eye, the same

sly mouth, above all, the same beautiful bow-legs, so inviting to a headstrong run-a-way pig to pop through.

Although it is pleasant in this hard-featured money-striving world, to see honest, plodding industry gradually surmount the difficulties of life, and rise to eminence and distinction; yet there is no such feeling engendered in beholding the mushroom exhalations of the turf expanding under the sunshine of prosperity; for somehow the "critturs," as Jock Haggish would call them, never know how to behave themselves. They always do something preposterous, either burst out into gaudy-coloured liveries, or carriages with two grooms in the rumble, or make some such outrageous extravagant display as causes the public to laugh, and their comrades to blush for their impudence.

Indeed we do not know, but that compelling them to exhibit themselves in some such way, is the best punishment for their audacity; for assuredly there is no position in which a man who has no business in one, feels so awkward as when shut up in a close carriage. The contortions of a half-drunken sailor enjoying himself is nothing to it; for Jack thinks it is all right, and that everybody is envying him, while the poor turfite is soon most painfully convinced that everybody is laughing at him, even to the servants who take pay for sitting behind him. Fancy the honour of serving a blackleg! Somehow the service is generally of short duration, for, as we have said before, turf-gotten money never seems to prosper, the recipients being up to-day and down to-morrow. Like moths they flutter round the candle of prosperity, and then suddenly extinguish themselves, either with more betting, or brandy and water, or perhaps with a combination of both.

Mr. Tom Tailings, at the time of our story, had just about got to the half-way house of turf prosperity—the period of existence that in the corresponding life of an artisan, would lead him to call for sherry and water instead of ale, wine-drinking being considered by some as the first stage on the road to gentility. Tailings, however, was a good deal in advance of the sherry; he called for champagne, a beverage that is also a good deal in advance of its time, seeing that there is about quadruple the quantity consumed that the vineyards produce. However, Tom paid for it as champagne, and he had a right to call it so if he liked. In addition to the fine clothes, the fine ties, the fine pins, and the "excellent sparkling," Tom had secured some two or three hundred pounds, which he complimented by calling thousands, or "thoosands," as he pronounced it; and leg-like, he yearned to display it. If a trader gets into a good thing he keeps it to himself, or perhaps runs it down while he quietly feathers his nest; but a "leg" likes to be noisy, and brawling, and attracting attention.

Kind fortune soon sent Mr. Tom the means of distinguishing himself. It so happened that the ill luck of the Forty Thieves, pursued them to the end of the season, and made them resolve at the end of the 'hay and straw meeting," to convert some of their horses into money;

and steam enabling a man to be anywhere and everywhere, Mr. Tom Tailings duly appeared with our hero among the select circle formed round the temporary rostrum of Mr. Dweller, the auctioneer, who was entrusted with the dispersion of the draft, to affect the sale of which of course a good many were introduced into the catalogue that were not meant to be parted with, except at full, or perhaps fancy, prices.

Time was that the tap of the auctioneer's hammer was supposed to denote the conversion of property into money, but modern "science" long since introduced a custom,—chiefly among household goods but now extended to horses, and perhaps to everything else—whereby the efforts of the auctioneer are but preliminary to the completion of the transfer, the intermediate process being what is technically called the "knock out." At every sale there are certain parties present who are ready to take things at their own price; but this of course, not being agreeable to the honourable fraternity generally, they form themselves into a sort of joint stock company, for the purpose of running up any *bonâ fide* bidder who declines to avail himself of the terms of the "knock out." If, however, an intending purchaser does agree to come in, then one of the party bids, and the rest direct their energies to ridiculing and running down the lot—declaring, if a carpet, that a person can see through it; if a carriage, that the wheels are so rotten the wood won't hold the nails; and if a horse, that he is either touched in the wind, or so slow, that a man could beat him on foot, by which means in nine cases out of ten perhaps, where the property is for absolute sale, they succeed in getting it at half its real value. The hammer having fallen, then comes the real legitimate—or, more correctly speaking, illegitimate sale; the late runners down now become the runners up, the lot is assessed at something like its fair value, and the transaction closes with a gain to both buyers, and, of course, a loss to the owner of the property; and also to the auctioneer, who is thus defrauded, or at all events, deprived of a portion of his fees.

That is now a common process, and it seems that where honour has ceased to exist amongst thieves, no number—not even forty—will restore its equilibrium; for the united confederates were subjected to the same treatment on the reduction of their stud, as old farmer Hobnail would have to undergo on the seizure of his pigs, and his poultry for rent. Our new acquaintance, Mr. Tailings, having a half-cousin in the "knock out" line, commissioned him to bid for two or three lots, whose pedigrees and performances did not threaten to make too great a hole in his "thoosands," and after the usual amount of laughing, throat-squeezing, rib-thumping, trottings up and trottings down, with exhortations from Mr. Dweller to the company to bid, a very good-looking bay colt, with a white ratch down its face, called Honest Billy, by Pickpocket, was knocked down at an apparently very low figure.

The same observation that we made with regard to peoples' heads,

namely, that no amount of outward inspection will enable a person to say where the brains are, and where they are not, applies also to the speed, if not to the endurance of horses, for assuredly no one seeing an animal huddled up in straw, or at exercise in sheeting and hoods, or trotting along to the excitement of the hammer, can predict how he may be endowed with speed on a suitable course, with ground to his mind, and all the other contingencies that constitute the uncertainties of a race. True, the Forty Thieves had tried Honest Billy, and found him wanting; but then, the thieves go for the great stakes, whereas our confederates were only nibblers, who would be content with the pickings of the minor courses, and Tailings' half-cousin intimating that our friends might be good customers, the members of the "knock out," consented to let them have the horse for twenty pounds more than they gave. And so our hero was launched on the turf.

Honest Billy, however, was not destined to retrieve his lost laurels under his old name, for the purchase being made just at the time that the Banker incautiously hollo'd about the estate, it was resolved that it would only be a proper compliment to call the horse after the property, namely, "Garlandale." So Honest Billy was duly re-christened under a proper discharge of the "best sparkling," and many predictions were indulged in as to the money he would win, and the cups and trophies with which he would decorate the sideboard of the dining-room in the projected new Hall. How far the anticipations were fulfilled will appear as we proceed in our story.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MR. CRACKNEL CAULDFIELD.

WHAT a wonderful institution is "*The Times!*" It is a perfect modern miracle. It has kept increasing for the last five-and-twenty years, till it is nearly the size of the table-cloth on which it is laid every morning at breakfast-time. No one feels fit to confront his fellow-men until he has mastered its leading contents. Through its medium every wish may be announced, and every want supplied. The second column of the supplement contains hints for a hundred novels. The open, the mysterious, the anxious, the forgiving, the mandatory, the admonitory, the conciliatory. Take a sample—"Folly.—All going on well: write immediately," &c.

"S. T. B.—Hereford—write immediately to M. J., Farnham," &c.

"My dear sister, I arrived in town on the 1st, and found," &c.

"P. Q. Gratefully acknowledges your bounty, most acceptable—very ill," &c.

Then comes a whole list of losses:

"Lost, a terrier; a letter; a portmanteau; a portmonnaie; a brooch; a locket."

Next the sentimental:

"If the gentleman who travelled in the 3·5 P.M. train, &c., to, &c., with a lady in a pink bonnet and ermine tippet, will," &c.

Followed by:

"Found a red and white pointer dog," &c.

"If this should meet the eye of," &c.

"Missing friends in Australia," &c.

"To heirs at law."

"Caution to purchasers of revolvers."

And so on to the bottom of the column.

Then the general announcements include almost every possible requirement: Houses, horses, estates, cooks, coals, coachmen, carriages, straw, stockings, steam-boats, candles, canaries, cows, books, bottles, boots, clocks, clothing, chickens, soap, sugar, shipments, towels, trousers, teeth, corsets, crinoline, cottage-pianos, bedsteads, brandy, Brighton, microscopes, mangles, and mustard; harmoniums, harrows, and hyacinths; umbrellas, and rollers—every imaginable article, and so arranged too, that a person knows exactly into which folds of the tablecloth to look for the advertisement of what he requires.

The pen and ink portrait gallery too, is very perfect, and often severely like. It must be very inconvenient to an absconding gentleman to find "one hundred pounds" reward offered for his apprehension, with some such minute description of his person as the following: "He is about 60 years of age; 5 feet 9 or 10 inches high; florid complexion; stout made; gray hair (thick bushy whiskers, which he sometimes dyes); walks very erect, with a short quick step, and wears a silk hat with flat brim, placed much over his eyes." After reading that, we should think the gentleman would very soon give up dyeing his whiskers, and have his hat on the back of his head like a lady's bonnet.

This department, we are sorry to say, is sometimes used for entrapping the confiding and unwary. We often see advertisements stating that if Jeremiah Waddle or Jonathan Lameduck, or some such gentleman, will apply to—say Mr Thomas Trueman's, in Red Lion Square, he will hear of something greatly to his advantage, and Jerry or Jonathan, as the case may be, on arriving breathless at Trueman's, fancying himself master of a sack full of sovereigns, finds himself in the grasp of a sheriff's officer, who politely informs him that it will be greatly to his advantage to pay his debts!

Still the publicity of "*The Times*" is truly invaluable, and though there are those who affect to discard the supplement, and indeed to read only the City article or the summary, there are others who work steadily through every column from births, deaths, and marriages to "Francis Goodlake," &c., at the end.

When Mr. Saplington, in pursuance of our Banker's imperative requirements, had exhausted every means of finding the much wanted man, he bethought him of appealing to what ought to have been his first move, and offering a reward for his discovery. Accordingly, an advertisement appeared in the all-potent second column of "*The Times*," announcing that if Mr. Cracknel Cauldfield, formerly of Mayfield, then of Harwich, afterwards of Horncastle, and late of Leominster (for Mr. Saplington had had a good holding scent, though he never could hunt up to his man), would send his then address, &c., he would receive ten pounds, with an invitation to any one to come forward and prove his death, or give other information respecting him under inducement of the same reward.

Now though Cracknel Cauldfield is a queer name, and one would think that there could be but one such person in the world, yet the advertisement had not been four-and-twenty hours in the paper before three parties of that name sprung up, one writing from Shepton Mallet, another from Great Marlow, and a third (who proved to be the son of the right Cracknel), from Cheadle, in Staffordshire, and after a desperate rummage in the garrets, among old trunks, old boxes, old spinning-wheels, old fire-screens, old furniture generally, the much-coveted, but long-neglected parchment was at length found in an old

plate-warmer, where, with other documents, it had reposed for many years out of harm's way from the rats. So just as the case seemed desperate, and our Banker was about to relinquish all his ambitious house-building projects, thereby of course causing an alteration in the name of the horse, by the judicious expenditure in the way of an advertisement, all matters were again put right, and the nearly abandoned purchase completed.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MR. O'DICEY AGAIN.

Scarcely were our Banker's scattered thoughts recalled and restored to the line of masonry, ere another catastrophe befel him, more fearful than the first. This, we need hardly say, was the arrival of Mr. O'Dicey's "little bill," for the experienced reader will doubtless wonder what has become of it all this time. Like all gambling-given bills, it was never to be negotiated, merely taken as a matter of memory, and to be renewed interminably. Now, however, it appeared with a certain mystical bit of paper attached to the left-hand corner, intimating that there were "no effects."

Worst of all, it was brought to their bank by one of Dibworth's saucy clerks, who flourished it triumphantly as he handed it over the counter. There it was, with the ill-written but too palpable signature of our friend, while the date corresponded with the time of his absence.

Scorer the cashier's few remaining hairs stood on end when he saw it, but thinking the appended slip of paper would be sufficiently, if not more than sufficiently explanatory, and not caring to indulge the bearer with an exclamation, he carried it into the lion's den, and laid it on the old scratched and battered leather table without note or comment.

Our unsuspicious friend was thumbing the interest tables of his "Banker's Sure Guide, or Monied Man's Assistant," calculating eighty-seven days' interest at eleven and a quarter per cent. on Doughey the baker's note for fifteen pounds, and thinking Scorer's presentation was merely a matter of reference, he completed his arithmetic before taking it up. The reader may imagine the start and stare he gave as he gradually saw and mastered the awkward phenomenon. He even forgot his favourite apophthegm of sivin and four being clivin, and dived right into the middle of the subject, "Dishonoured! ha? Jasper! ho! what's this, hey?" exclaimed he, appealing imploringly to the clerk.

"Don't know, sir, I'm sure," replied Mr. Scorer. "It's just as it came from Dibworth & Co."

"Dibworth & Co.!" exclaimed our half-frantic friend, "Dibworth

& Co.! why what in the name of all that is ugly has Jasper to do with Dibworth & Co.?"

Mr. Scorer stood mute.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" continued our Banker, wringing his fat hands as he threw himself back in his old semicircular chair. "Oh dear! oh dear! fear there's mischief in the wind for our old 'stablished house — 'stablished sivinteen 'underd and sivinty-four," and diving into his coat-pocket, he fished up a well-used chocolate-coloured bandana, and buried his face in its folds. All his visions of greatness seemed again to vanish at a moment—cows, pigs, poultry, and all.

Meanwhile Mr. Scorer returned through the bank, and telling the messenger with the utmost *nonchalance*, that the bill would be "duly attended to," he passed on through the little door leading into the house, and communicated with Mrs. Goldspink, who forthwith came hurrying to her husband.

He was still in the bandana, with the ill-omened document before him, which seemed to prevent his looking up, so Mrs. Goldspink began attributing his indisposition to the stuffyness of the little room and the too liberal hashed goose and toasted cheese supper he had indulged in over night; in which speculation, however, she was suddenly interrupted by the sick man exclaiming: "No, no, it's not the hashed goose, it's not the hashed goose, it's *that!*" taking a sly peep out of the corner of the kerchief, as he poked the bill towards her.

Mrs. Goldspink was then transfixed.

"Bless us, what could it all mean! Jasper putting his name to a bill! She couldn't believe it—and yet it was his handwriting—what could it mean?"

"Mean!" gasped the man of money—"mean! Oh dear! I'm afraid he's been robbed—got into the hands of the sharpers. The hunting horses were bad enough, but these racing ones, I fear, are far worse. Help me into the house," continued he, rising from his chair with averted head from the bill, and hurrying out of his den, he passed through the bank into the parlour. There sat the delinquent himself, reading "Bell's Life" with the greatest complacency, little dreaming of the consternation he was causing his worthy parents. They both at him at once—What had he been doing? What had he been about? Giving a bill, a thing he had been charged never to do! never to put his name to paper! "Oh dear! what did it all mean?"

Jasper, though considerably surprised, affected to treat the matter lightly.

"Oh dear! oh yes, oh yes, oh dear, all right" (hesitated he)—"no, it was a mistake. He knew what it was. Mr. O'Dicey would put it all right. It was merely a memorandum—a-a-a."

"Memorandum!" exclaimed the Banker, "why it's a regularly drawn and accepted bill, protested too; a thing that's frightful to contemplate, to say nothing of the amount, which was perfectly appalling."

"Oh yes," Jasper admitted it was large, but then it was not a real transaction, not a thing that was meant to be acted upon.

"Acted upon! why it has been acted upon," interrupted the Banker, "go and look at it yourself and see," and Jasper, glad of an excuse to get away, repaired to the office, where an inspection immediately recalled unpleasant recollections of the past—the sumptuous dinner, the honest major, the cards, the grill, and the double or quits, which led to the dreadful document before him. Then, further reflection recalled O'Dicey's repeated assurance that the bill was a mere matter of form, just to keep matters straight, should never be negotiated, and so on; and, unwilling to believe that so frank and generous a gentleman could be guilty of anything unhandsome, he determined to treat the matter as a mistake, and try to get it put right without further interference. Accordingly, after many scratchings of the head and eye-wanderings up to the ceiling, he wrote him the following letter:—

"Mayfield, *Nov.* 13, 1858.

"Dear O'Dicey,

"By some strange unlucky mistake, the memorandum or bill which I signed at Roseberry Rocks, on the night of your agreeable dinner-party, has been negotiated and returned to our bank dishonoured. As you will remember, it was expressly understood at the time it was given, that it was merely a sort of memorandum of the state of the game at the close of the evening's amusement, so that we might know how we stood when we began again, I wish you would have the goodness to get it withdrawn, so that we may again stand as we were. It isn't pleasant to have one's paper floating about, as I'm sure you will agree; besides which, it may be detrimental to the Bank. Please, therefore, look it up, and oblige, Dear O'Dicey,

"Very truly yours,

"Jasper Goldspink.

"To John O'Dicey, Esq.,
"Roseberry Rocks."

Mr. O'Dicey being a gentleman of large practice in the sharking way, carrying on business as well in the French capital as the English, and at most of the fashionable watering-places, was not quite so easily found as a dishonoured bill rendered desirable; and Dibworth's clerk looked in several times in passing to inquire after its safety, and at length hinted that the holder, who had given full value for it, would like to have it back, in order to take proceedings before any reply was received from the worthy. During all this time, our Banker was kept on the rack of suspense, now half inclined to dispute its validity altogether, now a quarter or so inclined to pay it and be done with it, hoping, though an expensive lesson, that it would make Jasper more cautious in future.

At last the fever of anxiety was somewhat allayed by the receipt of the following answer:

"Dear Goldspink,

"Yours of the 13th, addressed to Roseberry Rocks, after following me to various places, till it is stained with the variation of each post-office, at last reached me at the Rag and Famish Club, as I was passing through town, and I lose not a moment in writing to say, that it is quite a mistake your bill having got into circulation, for it ought to have been Captain Gammon's bill, and not yours, I having settled with the other parties in cash, so as to enable me to hold yours, till, as you say, the amount was either played off or the bill taken up at your utmost convenience. I now see, on looking among my disorderly papers, that I have given up the wrong one. This is unfortunate, but I fear it cannot now be helped; and perhaps the best way will be for you quietly to withdraw your bill, and keep it till we all meet again, and give you your well-deserved revenge. I must say that I never saw a man lose his money with a better grace than you did; unless, indeed, it was our friend Captain Gammon. Meanwhile, in great haste to save the post, believe me, dear Goldspink,

"Yours very sincerely,
"John O'Dicey.

"To Jasper Goldspink, Esq.,
"Mayfield."

"Sivin and four's eleven, and ninety nine, is a underd and ten, and sivin's a underd and sivinteen, this is the most audaciously inconsistent letter I ever read in my life!" exclaimed our Banker on perusing it. "A man talking about thousands as if they were sea-sand, and then beionging to a beggarly club, where they most likely have their knives and forks chained to the table, and sivinty sivin's a underd and ninety four, the whole thing's a reglar swindle, and I'll go before my Lord Size, and prove it." So saying, he threw down the letter in disgust, and produced an extensive sheet of paper to summon Mr. Saplington to his presence. Jasper did not like the idea of this, for he had often heard O'Dicey, when capering on the gentle milk-white horse of morality, denouncing the mean-spirited wretches who only play to win money, and expatiating on the disadvantages through life to a young man repudiating or disputing his debts of honour; a doctrine that O'Dicey used to enforce by pointing out sundry examples of parties whom he used to say he wouldn't touch with a pair of tongs, the parties however generally looking at O'Dicey as if they would not touch him either. Jasper therefore tried to keep the parental hand from the paper. He thought he could get matters put right. He had a good opinion of O'Dicey, who had always stood his friend, and endeavoured to keep him right when other parties wanted to cheat him. He couldn't believe that there was anything intentionally wrong.

The words "Rag and Famish," however, stuck in old sivin-and-four's throat. He could not get over them. He could not imagine that any good could possibly come of such a forlorn combination. "Rag and Famish" seemed to him to be the lowest pit of human degradation. He had no doubt it was a low cellar somewhere about Saffron Hill, or St. Giles's, constantly under the ken of the police. There was no saying but Jasper himself might go there next. "No, no; no Rags and Famishes for him. He was a substantial man, and could afford beef, mutton, and broad cloth."

Our friend Jasper, however, still worked the other way. He was afraid of the exposure—afraid of the slow-pointing of scorn proclaiming him a man who did not pay his debts. This too, just as he was going to alight upon the turf with Garlandale. Seeing, therefore, that O'Diecy's letter held out an overture for further correspondence, and that the substitution of his bill for Captain Gammon's had been accidental, it occurred to Jasper that the best thing to do would be to get the Captain's bill, and so set it off against his own little acceptance. Accordingly he wrote to "Dear O'Diecy," thanking him for his explanation, and asking him to send him Captain Gammon's bill to Mayfield. How O'Diecy laughed when he read the letter, and took the worthless document out of his desk to place in an envelope with "Mr. O'D.'s kind regards" written inside. "Wish you joy of it, old boy," said he, as he chucked the letter containing it into the pillar post at the Derby Station. Then when Jasper got it, he felt doubly triumphant, triumphant at having retrieved his position, and triumphant at having proved a true prophet. It was clear his father didn't understand the men of the present generation—was quite one of the past. What could be fairer or kinder than Mr. O'Diecy's conduct—nothing, he was sure. He carried the bill into the bank with a swagger, telling Scorer, as he handed it over, to let it be "looked to," meaning, presented for payment. Scorer descended upon it all fours as it were, for he was unused to such amounts, and moreover suspected something was wrong; but after straining his eye-balls, and scanning every word, every figure, every mark, he could find no fault with its form, so looking up at our friend, he gave an emphatic, "Yes, Sir;" saying to himself, "I wish you may get it."

Up, then, went the bill to London, along with the other bank documents, and Jasper felt quite relieved in his mind, and easy as to the result. Indeed he began to think himself somewhat of a conjuror. "Sharp" being the word in the City, the bill was journeying comfortably up Cornhill, in one of those easy black note-cases peculiar to stamped paper, and presently passed into the glibly gliding door of Grumpy and Stumpey's extensive establishment.

There were gentlemen in every variety of pecuniary activity, those in front, counting nice crisp five pound notes, or shovelling about sovereigns; those in the rear passing them inward, and those further

back noting them down. All were as busy as bees. A double line of customers—clients, we believe, is now the term—pressed onwards to the counter, or whatever they call that barrier, some looking extremely unlike the money they were entrusted with. Still they were recognised, their behests fulfilled, and the door swung again on their easy retreat. It seemed almost as if the golden age was returned, and money was to be had for asking. But stop; not quite so quick. We are now at the receipt of custom. The big bald-headed gentleman, with the clean linen and black satin vest, suddenly starts, like a setter crossing a scent, and stands electrified as he gets into the middle of our messenger's presentation.—"What's this!" exclaims he, weeding out the unlucky acceptance, and holding it up for inspection. "Gammon again!" exclaimed he with astonishment, "Won't do! most impudent man in existence;" whereupon he contradicted his assertion of having Gammon's acquaintance, by appending a bit of paper to the bill, with the words "not known" upon it; whereas, it is clear, the *office* should have been "better known than trusted." However, the bill was handed back to the clerk, who received it with the indifference peculiar to strangers, and carried it back to their firm to retransmit to the country. That evening's post saw it flying back.

Our Banker was not surprised to see it again, for he had lived too long in the world, and had scraped and screwed at shillings and sixpences too hard to believe that thousands were to be raised in this off-hand sort of way; moreover, he did not see how Captain Gammon's bill being paid would absolve Jasper from his obligations, and altogether he was very much perplexed, and wished that Cracknel Cauldfield's appointments had never been found—he would then have jogged on to the end of his tether, and let all ambitious villa-building projects alone. No pigeon pies, no brawn, no bacon, no cooing doves or murmuring rills, could equal the soft music of £ *s. d.*

It was clear that Jasper had been grievously imposed upon, and it was bad to part with so much money. If it had been hundreds he might perhaps have got over it, but thousands—thousands, were awkward counting. Then to dispute the thing on the ground of its being a gambling transaction, and having the holder coming into court to swear that he was ignorant of the facts and had given full value for the bill, on the strength of Jasper's most respectable name, would be like throwing cold water on the Bank, already sufficiently damaged by Dibworth's impudent clerk's talking about it, as if he was going to stop payment. Indeed he almost feared they might make a run upon it as it was, for there is nothing so ticklish as the fame of a bank. At last he made up his mind to pay and be done with it, but only on the express condition that Jasper eschewed cards, and above all promised him never to have anything to do with the Rag and Famish Club. "Promise me, promise me faithfully, Jasper," said he, with tears in his eyes, "never to have anything to do with that

terrible club! I dread the very name—it must be a shocking, a frightful place—a place where they would very likely cut you up into quarters and drop you quietly over Blackfriars Bridge in the dead of the night, or shoot you through the head and bury you in the back kitchen, as somebody did Mr. Manning or Mr. Manning did somebody, I forget which way it was."

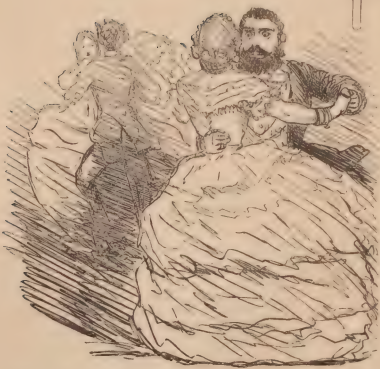
And Jasper, who had no more taste for losing his cash than his father, and thought he saw his way to great wealth on the turf, readily promised all that was asked.

And so, what with fear of Dibworth and the fame of their most respectable bank—above all, of the Rag and Famish Club—the beloved cash at length retired the worthless piece of paper. So far, however, as the latter influence was concerned, the worthy man might have saved his money, for it turns out on inquiry that Mr. O'Diecy does not belong to the Rag.

And now, having floundered so long in the muddy waters of impurity, let us expand our wings and mount into the lofty regions of high life.

CHAPTER L.

PRINCE PIROUETTEZA.



THE same Comet year that showered such blessings on the country was not unmindful of the town, for that auspicious spring produced the elegant Prince Pirouetteza, whose easy impudence and delightful dancing caused such sensation among the angels in the mundane heaven of high life. The Prince, we believe, was not regularly accredited to our court, but being on easy terms with his tailor, his swarthy face and jet black beard were soon revolving with the crinoline, to the great disgust of the native circlers, who stood frowning and biting their lips and wondering what the deuce the women could see in the foreigner. Still the Prince persevered assiduously, and the ladies seemed to take a pleasure in announcing, without reference to their cards, that they were engaged to dance the sought-for dance with Prince Pirouetteza; and presently His Highness would spin them about in a way that could only be likened to the movement of a large tetotum. So he rose rapidly in request; and as the capering season drew to a close, and luggage vans began to usurp the place of dashing equipages, there was a great run upon the Prince for the autumn sports and the adornment of country houses in the winter. Foremost in this lion hunt was the Duchess of Tergiversation, who, though a

well-bred woman, was as inveterate a tuft-hunter as could well be imagined, and who was always scheming to outwit some one else in the same line. The Duchess, indeed, was a woman of excellent faith, whom no amount of exposures would shake; and sham counts and sham barons and sham marquises and sham dukes only made her more confident in the integrity of the next comer. "They couldn't be all shams," she said, so she would take up with the last man as eagerly as she did with the first.

It would indeed be an evil day if a continental "Burke"* or "Hardwicke" were to arise to dispel the pleasing delusions of the English fair, by publishing the "Who's who" of all the distinguished foreigners who honour our shores with their presence. We fear there would be sad mortification sometimes, and that even our Prince would not have fared quite so well had it been known that he was only the son of an impudent dancing-master at Florence. Hence his agility with his toes. Indeed he would have made a fortune if he had followed the paternal profession, for he was a natural dancer, rather above than below the middle height, with a well set-up figure, and an easy supple elasticity in every limb; but being just in the morning of life, with a little money left him by an uncle, he thought it would be far better to dance on terms of equality, and take whatever good the gods might provide. So he dubbed himself a Prince, and proceeded to enact the part.

"Prince" is a grand travelling title anywhere—magnificent in England. "He lives like a prince" is supposed to be the highest eulogium that can be passed on an establishment. We always thought our excellent Commander-in-Chief rather lost *caste* when he changed from a Prince into a Duke. Every county has its duke, but a prince is not seen every day. We associate the title with pomp and immense profusion, trumpets and a sovereign-for-a-sandwich sort of work. To be sure, railways have rather mitigated the severity of magnificence, but that is all in favour of the party sustaining the character, and also enables him to exercise the condescending amenities so acceptable from exalted rank. The great man in a train is always known before he gets to the end of his journey.

"His Highness," as he called himself on his luggage labels, though in good demand in fairish circles, had no such grand invitation as that of the Duke, or rather the Duchess, of Tergiversation, of whom, of course, he made the most during his peregrinations, taking care to time himself for its fulfilment. So he passed from house to hall, and from hall to park, and from park to place, eating and drinking and dancing and making extremely merry.

It is a hard life that of an itinerant eater, drinker, and bed-airer—always expected to be lively and gay, always eating and drinking more than is good for one—never to have a quiet evening alone to set matters right, so as to rise for once with an unheated head. To be

sure, a Prince has the advantage over other people of being consulted as to his wishes, and there is such a taste for practical courtiership in this country, that the more unreasonable he was, the better some people would like him, and the more flattered they would be by his presence; but His Highness was an accommodating man, and chimed into the habits of each house just as if he belonged to it, by which means he prolonged his stay, and was not unfrequently asked to return. Then as he moved about, the country papers chronicled his whereabouts; as for instance—

"His Highness Prince Pirouetteza, after a prolonged visit to our noble neighbour, the Right Hon. Lord Lumbago, at Lumbago Castle, has proceeded to Sir George Drearynut's, at Turnabout Tower, where a select circle are invited to meet him;" and then, when he left Drearynut's, there was another paragraph noticing the adjournment; so that what with prince in public, prince in private, prince in the papers, our friend felt himself a prince in reality. If the old skipper could have seen him, fêted, bowed, and bended, how he would indeed have laughed at the credulity of the English.

At length the Tergiversation visit became due, and with duplicate directions of Rock's largest sized adhesive luggage labels on the numerous packages containing the comprehensive wardrobe, our great man and his valet left Major Lobster's at Hardstuff Hill, where they had been sojourning for a couple of days, for the little railway station of Rattenford-pool, to catch one of the few trains that condescend to stop there. Adopting Lord Brougham's excellent maxim, that it is better to be a quarter of an hour too soon than half a minute too late, our magnifico drove up in such capital time, that Tommy Rutter, the isolated station-master, who lived there like Robinson Crusoe with nobody but a man Friday of a porter to converse with, thought to get a little gossip with the arrivers before the train came up; but finding whom he had got, he was completely overpowered, and could hardly direct Friday what to do. The valet being a tall man, of course Tommy took him for His Highness, and bowed and humbled himself accordingly. It was not until he was saluted with a "Go along you old fool," that he was sensible of his mistake. He then turned the steam of his politeness on the Prince, pending which ingratiation, the shrill whistle of the engine announced the approach of the train, and the "Meteor" came tearing along at a pace that looked very unlike stopping. And it did shoot past a good way, as if calling at such an untraffic-like place was not only a sham but a degradation, and the guard seemed half incredulous when Robinson Crusoe proclaimed he had passengers to go.

But when the man Friday came tottering along under the oppression of luggage, and the imposing directions caught the guard's eye, he thought it was lucky they hadn't shot past, and inwardly settled that there was no saying where people might come from. He then run

the contents of the carriages through his mind to decide where he should put the distinguished stranger. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Dotchin and family were in number twenty-nine, some gents were smoking in thirty, there was a child in arms in thirty-one, thirty-two had two invalid ladies with a black nurse—but thirty-three had only Mrs. and Miss Meredith, who he thought would be glad of a little company. So he hastily opened the door—the ladies whipt up their legs, and their kerchiefs, while His Highness came headforemost in, followed by caps, comforters, cloaks, furs, foot-warmer, everything calculated to make a Prince comfortable. He then soused himself into a seat, with his back to the engine, and having broken the ice of conversation by placing the window at the disposal of the ladies, a whistle and a waive of the hand from the guard, set the engine to her collar: a jerk, and a jolt, and they are again on the wing. Getting into a railway-train, and shooting away, after a long cross-country trail over woolly roads with weak washy horses, feels like the rapid descent of a Montagne Russe after a walk, so quickly does a traveller get to the end of his journey. He has gone ten miles before he gets settled into his seat, and ten more before he is familiar with the new sensation.

Ladies are generally much more conversable in railway carriages than gentlemen, and Miss Meredith, who had been educated at one of those highly polished seminaries where they first charge for everything in a lump, and then in detail afterwards, finding herself in company with a foreigner, availed herself of the opportunity for airing her Kensal Green French, while His Highness reciprocated his English, as they shot along the smoothly gliding plains through which their route lay. Meanwhile Mamma sat complacently by, well pleased to find that her daughter had got so much learning for her money. At length the pace began to slacken, and the train finally drew up at a more imposing-looking station, on the wooden wings of which were painted in large red letters on a salmon-coloured ground, "Straw Hill Station for Tansey Hill and Tergiversation Castle." "Targe—gi—vare—sation Castle," said His Highness, spelling it. "Ah, this shall be my station," and just as he said it, the guard appeared at the door to release him, while a long line of heads protruded at the windows to see for whom the Duke's carriage with the four grays was waiting. Presently a tall footman with a lace-oppressed hat was seen piloting the great man across the platform to the exit door, and the hurrying guard, in reply to the numerous inquiries who it was, exclaimed "Prince Piper Something!" as he gave a shrill whistle, and the engine again set off with a snort and a tug. Then the curious travellers wished they had known before, and were sorry they had not taken a good look at him.

Meanwhile, the Prince having entered the ducal carriage, was whisked away as fast as four horses could lay legs to the ground, and

as the last rays of a setting sun burnished up the landscape, the easy swing of the well-built carriage landed him on the wood-pavement of the noble portico. Here he was received by the stately Mr. Cucumber in all the splendour of silk calves and varnished shoes with many men out of livery, and many more in livery, hovering on his margin to dismantle the arriver, which being accomplished, Mr. Cucumber backing through outer and inner hall, brought the great man up in excellent form to the foot of the grand staircase, where he was received by no less a personage than the Duke of Tergiversation himself.

Mutual salutations over, the Prince wanted to kiss the Duke, but his Grace declined that, the crowd of servants slowly retired, and the Duke proceeded to conduct his distinguished guest up-stairs, amid expressions of his gratitude to him for his condescension in thus coming to visit them in their humble abode, for the Duke could condescend when it suited his purpose, though riding the high horse was more in his way. With speeches such as these he ushered His Highness into the Duchess's beautiful boudoir, where sat her Grace, with her widowed sister, the Lady Cassandra Milicent Honoria Hopkins, the latter with every disposition to change her name again. Here he was again most cordially greeted, and invited to partake of the ladies' hospitality of tea, a request that he very complacently complied with, and the Duke having now performed his part of the ceremony, quietly withdrew leaving the ladies to pursue their designs at their leisure, aided by the influence of a long winter's evening.

And when at last they retired to their rooms to dress for an eight o'clock dinner, the Prince settled that Lady Honoria wouldn't be bad looking if she didn't squint, while her Ladyship thought his Highness was a most agreeable man, and greatly superior to Hopkins.

CHAPTER LI.

OLD AND NEW SQUIRES.

When a stone-breaker begins to ply his useful labours on the road, he generally selects a large stone wherewith to form the foundation of his heap, and so his Grace the Duke of Tergiversation used to establish his parties on the foundation of some such attractive centre as a Prince. Having thus laid the foundation of his heap, he investigated his position in the country; thought who were steady—who were beginning to jib, who it would be useful to cajole, and forthwith invitations used to issue, *déjeûners* to the tractable, dinners to the docile, *fêtes* to the froward. A person may be brought to the neutral

ground of a *fête* who might shy at the apparent downright committal of a dinner.

The Duke weighed everything well before he did it, and never took any step without a motive.

Time was—before the establishment of railways—that the Squires used to respond to the call of their chiefs with the greatest alacrity, but the whistle of the engine has somewhat dispelled the authority of the leaders, and made men think more for themselves than they did. In truth, there is perhaps no class of Her Majesty's subjects more benefited by the introduction of railways than the country gentlemen generally, who too often, after what used to be called the "Grand Tour," buried themselves and their usually good educations in remote country places, there to marry "neighbours' bairns," and perpetuate the practice. Now they fly about the world, here and there and everywhere, importing ladies from all parts, making the whole kingdom but as one county, while the lists of members of the various Clubs show that they are not indifferent to the attractions of the capital. The very thing has come to pass that was predicted when stage-coaches were first established some two hundred years ago, namely, that "country gentlemen and their wives would get easily and cheaply conveyed to London," without the remainder of the prophecy, however, being fulfilled, namely, "that they would not settle quietly at their homes in the country afterwards," for whole families whisk about in all directions, and feel all the better for the change, enjoying their spacious homes the more from having perhaps put up with contracted quarters elsewhere.

Heaven help the parties' ideas of ease who attributed anything of the sort to even the latest and best of the old stage-coaches, let alone the ponderous, unwieldy vehicles that first ploughed the bottomless roads, turning up the great boulder-stones like flitches of bacon, and taking the liberal allowance of from twelve to sixteen days in performing the journey between London and Edinburgh! Dr. Johnson, we make no doubt, described very accurately what they were in his time, when he boasted that he had travelled from London to Salisbury in a day by the common stage, "hung high and rough." The doctor's observation, that a postchaise had jolted many an intimacy to death, was doubtless very correct also. Who hasn't a lively recollection of the musty old horrors? Talking of travelling, there is or was a notice in the coffee-room of the Black Swan Hotel at York, stating that a four days' stage-coach would begin to run (crawl, would perhaps have been a more proper expression), on Friday the 12th of April, 1706.

"All that are desirous to pass from London to York," continues the advertisement, "or from York to London, or any other place on that road, let them repair to the Black Swan in Holborn, in London, or to the Black Swan in Coney Street, in York.

"At both which places they may be received in a stage-coach every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, which performs the whole journey in four days (if God permits). And sets forth at five in the morning. And returns from York to Stamford in two days, and from Stamford by Huntingdon to London in two days more. And the like stages on their return. Allowing each passenger 14 lbs. weight, and all above 3*d.* a-pound."

Rather a diminutive allowance for a modern exquisite's luggage.

As time advanced, the pace certainly improved, but even up to the last of the coaches, they were five times as long as the rail.

In truth, the country gentlemen were a land-locked, leg-tied tribe, before the introduction of railways—coaching was uncomfortable, and posting expensive, besides which a journey took such a time. There was no running up to town for a week in those days. It took the best part of a week coming from a remote country to make the journey, and recover from the effects of it. No wonder the gentry did not make them very often, and contented themselves with their country towns instead of the capital. They were somebody in them, but nobody when they got into London. It seems rather strange, though, that even in those days, when transit was so slow and expensive, and men had to live so long on the road, that there were always plenty of country gentlemen ready to contest their respective counties, though the cost was frightful, and the poll as lingering as the coaches.

Now, when both counties and costs are curtailed, and transit so quick, there is great difficulty in getting country vacancies filled by resident gentry as they occur. The fact is, the world is so opened out, that every man who has a taste for travel, or who can sit a horse, or walk a moor, thinks he can employ his time and money better than in paying for working for other people. Members ought to be elected free of expense, and then let them work for nothing if they like. It is singular that some of the greatest screws—some of the most determined "nothing for nothing," and uttermost-farthing men, are now the greatest spendthrifts in the matter of electioneering expenses. And the humiliating part of the matter is, that men who question and fight every farthing in their respective trade transactions, will part with thousands upon thousands in the wildest, blindest way, and declare that they hadn't the slightest idea the money was for anything but legitimate expenses! Why didn't they see to its application, then?

But to return to the Old Squires. Another safety-valve that the gentry of the old school had for emitting the steam of their wealth, besides keeping hounds and electioneering, was in huge house-building—they built against each other. If Squire Fatfield built a great staring house, Squire Flaggon would follow suit with a bigger, and Squire Jollybuck would cap Squire Flaggon with a larger still. Now building a big house, and buying a big house, are two distinct things; for the builder of a big house is expected to live in it, and maintain a

suitable establishment, while the buyer of a big house can shut up as much of it as he finds is too large for his purpose. Then the larders, and the cellars, were expected to correspond with the houses, the characters of the owners depending a good deal on the strength of their taps, while the conviviality of the dining-room always found a hearty response in the servants' hall—masters and butlers considering it a reproach to let any one leave the house sober. These hospitalities expired together, French wines superseding the glorious old port, and railways opening out other means of expenditure than upon malt liquor for gratuitous distribution. A country house in former days was little better than a great unlicensed inn—everything was taken in that arrived, and everybody had to be refreshed that came. We have heard of a gentleman—not an M.P., or a man of large fortune either—whose brewer's bill for a single year, amounted to no less a sum than eight hundred pounds!

In thus noting the manners and customs of a bye-gone day, we must not omit to do justice to the merits of the port wine, which certainly was excellent. There was no buying of two dozen hampers in those days; every man had his stock of port wine in wood as well as in bottle, and that in the wood was not advanced to the bottle before a long probationary process. Being at length bottled, it would lay many years in its bin mellowing for use, an occasional bottle being produced to competent judges to see how it was advancing, and then when it was at length pronounced "fit," it was "drunk on the premises" without further to-do. Port was the staple beverage in those days, fine clear ruby-coloured wine, not a headache in a hogshead of it as the old ones used to say, and certainly they tried it at high pressure. They generally drank out of small glasses, so small indeed as to be insignificant, and a man helped himself almost incontinently, as the oft-recurring bottle passed round. In the midst of mirth and conversation, one man is very apt to do what another does, and it is not till the next morning that he becomes sensible of any excess.

There was no blowing men out with Champagne or sparkling Moselle during dinner then, as there is now; Sherry and Madeira were the regulation wines, varied perhaps latterly with a little of what the Yorkshire farmer called "Bluecellas;" but the dinner wines were rarely taken into account, the night's consumption being calculated solely on the Port. In fact, the real business of the evening did not commence until the ladies (or as they say in Courts of Justice, women and children) had withdrawn from the dining-room; then the horse-shoe table would be brought out, the fire stirred up, the log put on, and everything arranged for a symposium.

We can fancy the surprise and indignation of a party of these worthies at the intrusion of the three-quarters drunken butler, and the half-drunken footman, with coffee, at the end of half an hour after they had got so settled. We think they would go out faster than

they came in. But we will not imagine anything so monstrous and inhospitable. No; the party sit true to their glasses, the bottle circulates briskly, the glasses are fairly filled to the brim, and as fairly drained, and a couple of hours glide away, amidst jokes, songs, and sentiments, ere there is even a summons from the ladies. If the jokes were not very new, they answered just as good a purpose as if they were, and it shows a kindly disposition to greet an old friend with a laugh. There was no *Punch* in those days to supply the weekly stock of fun, and the papers were small, and deficient of news. No family breakfast table-cloth-like sheets, with information from all parts of the globe. But if the size was small, the price was large; sevenpence being charged, some forty years ago, for a four-columned London paper of four pages. A quick reader would skim through one of them in five minutes, for the type was bold and well-leaded. The country papers were worse, and contained little but advertisements:—"Horse stolen," "Hay for Sale," "Green Dragon Inn to Let," "Main of Cocks to be Fought," "Gout and Bilious Pills," "Cornhill Lottery Tickets," "Fire and Life Assurance Offices," all well spread out in the most liberal, amplified way; mixed with murders, inquests, and a very slight sprinkling of political and parliamentary news. No wonder that people were thrown on their own and each other's resources for information and amusement.

Now, every pursuit and calling has its organ, all admirably conducted, and published at very low prices, so that a modern squire can select such papers as suit his taste, and have his non-eating, non-drinking guests down by each post, whom he can lay aside when he's had enough of their company, which he can't do by a tiresome chattering guest, who can neither talk nor hold his tongue. Some squires are not very lively. We shall presently have the pleasure of introducing a gentleman to the reader, who is only amusing when he falls asleep or talks in his slumbers.

The establishment of the Penny Post, and the liberal scattering of post-offices too, has been a wonderful boon to country gentlemen, indeed to all sorts and conditions of people; but the old squires being about the only people in the country who received letters, or who, perhaps, could read them when got, were often sadly put to in the sending long distances for them. To be sure many of them did not care much about getting them, and there are even some now, who if they happen to leave home for a few days, won't have them forwarded on to where they are.

The grand, the crowning benefit of all however, were railways. Without them, cheap postage, cheap papers, cheap literature, extended post-offices, would have been inefficient, for the old coaches would never have carried the quantity of matter modern times has evoked. Who does not remember the last spasmodic efforts of the unwashed, worn-out old vehicles, and weak horses to compete with the accu-

mulating traffic in the neighbourhood of a newly-making line—amid the anathemas of coachmen and guards, and their brandified predictions of a speedy return to the road? But at a certain hour on a certain day, without noise, or boast, or effort, came the smoothly-gliding engine, whisking as many passengers along as would have filled the old coaches for a week, unlocking the country for miles, and bringing parties within a few hours of each other who had formerly been separated by days. Large, roomy, prebendal stall-fitted-up like vehicles, usurped the place of little stuffy, straw-bedded stages, into which people packed on the mutual accommodation principle, you letting me put my arm here, I letting you put your leg there. So they toiled on through a live-long day, cramped, squeezed, and confined, making about the same progress that they do now in a couple of hours with the greatest ease and enjoyment. Independently of the saving of time, railways may be looked upon as downright promoters of longevity, for assuredly a man can do and see twice as much as he formerly could without, so if Squire Mistletoe lives to seventy or eighty, he will be entitled to have put on his monument that he died at a hundred and forty, or a hundred and sixty, as the case may be. Squire Mistletoe can run up to town fifty times for once that his father did, and feel all the better instead of all the worse for the trip.

The next greatest boon to railways that modern squires have to be thankful for, is the great multiplication of London Clubs.

Without Clubs, the railway system would have been incomplete. After such luxurious travelling a man requires something better than the old coaching-houses—the Bull-and-Mouth, the Golden Cross, or even than the once prized Piazza, with its large cabbage-smelling coffee-room. A night at the old Bull-and-Mouth, with its open corridors, was a thing not to be forgotten. The railway companies, to be sure, anticipated the want, and built spacious hotels at their respective termini, the Piazza became a Crystal Palace, and the Bull-and-Mouth changed its ugly name! but disguise it as you will, an hotel is an hotel, and an Englishman cannot make himself believe that it is his home.

Then these railway houses are all out of the way of where pleasure-seeking people want to be, and though a party's requirements are fairly supplied, yet these hotels hold out no inducement for a run up to town for the mere pleasure of the thing. This is what the Clubs do. They invite visits. A man feels that he has a real substantial home—a home containing every imaginable luxury, without the trouble of management or forethought—a house that goes on as steadily in his absence as during his presence, to which he has not even the trouble of writing a note to say he is coming, to find everything as comfortable as he left it.

No preparation, no effort, no lamps expiring from want of work; good fires always going, good servants always in attendance, every-

CHAPTER LII.

SHOOTING AND SLAUGHTERING.

HAVING now, like Mrs. Glasse, caught his hare, the Duke of Tergiversation proceeded to consider how he should cook him; roast him, bake him, jug him, or stew him. The Prince was there for two distinct purposes, viz., that of the Lady Honoria Hopkins, and his Grace's own, who of course wanted to make a magnet of attraction of him. The two pursuits being perfectly dissimilar could be carried on simultaneously without detriment to each other.

Leaving the ladies, therefore, to their own devices, we will proceed to notice his Grace's entertainment of the great guest.

Beyond striving for power or place, the Duke of Tergiversation had no particular pursuit that interested him more than another, though he turned his hand to most things, by way of keeping up his interest and doing as others did. Hunting he followed as a matter of business; keeping the hounds because he thought they got him votes; and he shot on a somewhat similar principle. In the shooting way he was, perhaps, more determined than he was in the hunting line, for he liked to compete with his political opponent, the Earl of Musk and Lavender; so if his Lordship announced that so many guns had killed so many head of game, the Duke would bestir himself to eclipse the performance. Now it's all very well for people to say I *will* have plenty of pheasants, I *will* have plenty of partridges, I *will* have plenty of hares; but unless they take the necessary means of securing

them, they stand a very poor chance of having them. Lord Lavender was a shooter, a slaughterer rather, and fed highly, allowing a thousand a-year for barley, whereas the Duke of Tergiversation only allowed a hundred; and most of the land about the castle being in grass, there was no tenants' grain whereon to make reprisals.

Bagwell was therefore in a somewhat similar position to poor Ducrow at Astley's, who was overheard exclaiming one night, when it was his turn to go upon the stage to represent Autumn in the allegorical piece called the "Seasons," "Ow the 'ell can I play Hautumn without the happles?" "Ow the 'ell could Bagwell have a good *battue* without the barley?"

The Duke, however, didn't care about the barley, he was peremptory, and if he willed a thing, he would know the reason why he hadn't it; and Bagwell knew by the experience of his predecessors that if the slaughter was not commensurate with the Duke's expectations, his place would very soon be vacant. So he had to exert his utmost energies, arrange the covers to the best advantage for back-handing the birds, and employed people to beat all the straggling out-lying ones down into the magic circle of the beat. He then essayed to supply any deficiency by an ingenious expedient, that we shall relate hereafter.

The cooking question with the Duke then was, whether to lead off with a hunt, or a shoot, or a course, or a flourish about the country in the carriage and four. His Highness, like most foreigners, including both hunting and shooting under the one comprehensive term "*chasse*," was quite ready to assist at one, and the Duke having duly conned over the eligible parties to ask, it was finally arranged that a Battue should inaugurate the Prince's visit. It required a little tact and consideration to get it up properly, for some people like battues while others don't. Mr. Waddles would like to shoot if Mr. Pepper was to be there; while Mr. Addleton would not go if he thought farmer Meadowcroft was coming. Again, the guns are to be taken into account, some people being too good shots, others too bad; Tomkins dangerous and Simpkins not altogether safe. There is the excitement of being shot as well as the excitement of shooting.

In addition to all this, the Duke had the political and other tendencies of the parties to consider, for he was "a nothing for nothing man," and always liked to see his way to a return. Asking people to come and shoot at a battue with a Prince, was quite a different thing to giving them a day's leave over hill and dale, from Eastgate rim to Westfield corner, or from Broomey Banks to Limefield Lawn. And this leads us to observe, that it is hardly possible to imagine that one and the same amusement can be followed in such ways as to look like two distinct pursuits, as in the case of shooting and battueing. In one case a man goes out with his dogs and gun, just as he would with his walking stick; roves the fields, looks at his stock or his

drains, or his turnips, or the coming corn; goes just as fancy prompts him, or his dog inclines to his game; if he gets his two or three brace of birds, well and good, if not, he gets healthy exercise, and the birds are there for another day; he has looked over the manor, and let the country see that the Squire is astir. He has used shooting much as Beckford used hare-hunting, who said that it "should be taken instead of a ride after breakfast to get one an appetite for dinner. If you make a serious business of it," says he, "you spoil it." That is just the case with the battue. There is little or no exercise, while there is great preparation, trouble, and expense. True, in ordinary shooting, a stranger does not range the estate with the same interest as the owner; but it is perfectly possible to have quite as much game as will satisfy every reasonable requirement, and bring a friend home with a very good appetite for dinner without any extravagant outlay. The exercise and the pleasure a man has in watching the working of his dogs, is quite as great as sending the poor birds neck and crop over. If, as is said of coursing, you are mad for a moment, and starved for an hour; so with the battue, you exterminate in a day what should serve you a year.

We never heard of but one utilitarian reason attempted to be given for the battue, which was, that to lessen the quantity of game and to kill it for the surrounding district, the *battue* is infinitely a better way than to potter after game thinly spread over a wide extent, whereby a man would not be able to kill half so much; but that is rather an argument for not having so much game than for reducing it in that way. The party, to be sure, added a very sensible observation, namely, "that elderly gentlemen, like himself, who had had the gout, could not get over hedges and ditches as well as they did five-and-twenty years before; and therefore, without the *battue*, they would be debarred from the amusement altogether." Still they are not the things for able-bodied men; and the fact of their being of foreign extraction does not recommend them to our notice. Another thing is, that after all the barley—the beat, beat, beating, and the bang, bang, banging—the "tottle of the whole," as poor Mr. Hume used to say, is tame and insignificant compared to the campaign of the foreigner. "I assisted," writes Count Veltheim from Germany to a friend in England, "at a *battue* at Baron Assburg's" (a very proper name for the giver of such an entertainment), "where a company of a dozen shots killed in three days 13 deer, 56 roes, 10 foxes, and 327 hares. We could at the same time have killed a dozen wild boars if the proprietor of the estate had not wished them to be spared."

The Count then relates how two friends of his had been at a battue, where in four days 2400 hares were killed; "but," says the Count, "I do not like such feats, which are more a massacre than a sport; partly, because I am of opinion, that there should be at all sports some chance and skill; and partly, because I like shooting the best

where different kinds of game are expected, though not in such immense quantities."

The sport that the then King of Naples, the greatest sportsman of Europe, is reported to have had in Germany, about the year 1791,* would have been more to the Count's taste, so far as variety is concerned; the result being—5 bears, 1820 wild boars, 1968 stags, 13 wolves, 354 foxes; pheasants, rabbits, hares, she-goats, roebucks and partridges, innumerable. The results of a British battue, the pheasants, partridges, and hares, seem small by the side of such doings as that.

But let us to the Ducal preserves, and see what we can do. First, however, for a word with the Keeper, and about the guests.

CHAPTER LIII.

MR. BAGWELL THE KEEPER.

The Duke of Tergiversation's were capital covers, and wanted nothing but the barley to make them perfect. They were warm and dry, with plenty of nice underwood, mingled with briars and brambles and other leaf-retaining shrubs, or weeds as they would be called elsewhere. Then there were thick grassy and sedgy spots for the accommodation of the hares and restless rabbits, with rare temptation for woodcocks. Altogether they were very good, and ranged conveniently round the castle. Bagwell's pretty lodge stood on the gently rising ground of Sunnybrow Hill, nestling among cedars and evergreens, and cut off from the kennel by a huge, well-clipped yew hedge, that would have puzzled Mr. Haggish to get over. It was a thatched, latticed-windowed, woodbine-porticoed house, with the usual museum of natural history—rats, cats, weazels, hawks, owls, magpies, &c., in various stages of decomposition—nailed in rows against the end.

Mr. Bagwell had been in a good many places, and there were few of the tricks of his trade that he was not up to. He never staid very long anywhere, having been dismissed from one place for not having any foxes, from another for having too many, and from a third for having neither foxes nor pheasants. Still he was what the country people call a "*slee* chap;" knew well where to sprinkle the white peas, sow sunflower or plant Jerusalem artichokes, to tice over a neighbour's pheasants; and being a big, burly, bullying sort of fellow, he kept the country quiet, and prevented stories getting to the Duke's ears that might otherwise have reached them.

Bagwell used often to turn out on his white pony to criticise his

* Blaine's Rural Sports.

aversion, Mr. Haggish's proceedings with the hounds, always declaring confidentially to his comrades, that that "Haggish John," as he called him, was the greatest humbug he had ever set eyes on. It was now, however, Mr. Haggish's turn, and Bagwell felt that he would be sure to retaliate. He would have given his ears for it to have been a wet day. No such luck, however, for Bag; on the contrary, it was a lovely one—a sort of summer day, that somehow or other had got slipped into winter, just as a sovereign sometimes gets slipped into one's silver. The sky was blue, the air was clear and calm; the sun shone brightly, burnishing up the ruddy beech and the browning oaks, while the evergreens, the yews, the pines, the cedars, stretched themselves out comfortably against their late oppressive rivals, the now leafless elms and ash. This is the time that a man feels the value of his evergreens, and almost wishes his trees were all such, just as in spring, when the larch puts forth its early light-green leaves, he wishes his trees were all larch; and when the sycamore or something else succeeds, he wishes they were all sycamores, or whatever the others happen to be, and inwardly resolves to plant a great profusion of his favourites in the autumn.

The days of early winter are generally either very fine and bright, or very dull and hazy, scarcely any day at all, indeed—days that in towns the sun has to be supplemented by the gas, and the country looks like an immense vapour bath.

Having started betimes and cracked the country round, and placed sentinels at all the likely points to scare back invaders, Mr. Bagwell at length returned to his residence to array his stalwart figure in the green and gold livery of office, and proceed to the rendezvous at Ranger the Under-keeper's Lodge at Merevale Gate. Having accomplished the toilette, and crowned himself with the lace-bedizened hat, he invested himself with the insignia of office in the shape of a little knotty dog-whip, and, unkennelling a couple of spaniels, set off on his mission, inwardly hoping that things might turn out as well as he could wish. He didn't want to change his place if he could help it. As he crossed the spacious park, the straggling infantry of beaters—youths in smocks, youths in fustian, youths in tweeds—were seen converging on the same quarter; while the clatter-patter, clatter-patter, of the distant blockers was borne down wind upon the light western breeze.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

BESIDES other eccentric freaks that the great "Goldengoose" railway played, it changed the Duke of Tergiversation's grand carriage drive from the south side of the Castle to the north. We don't mean to say, that the railway directors rolled it up and carried it away bodily, but by running the line up the valley of the Dart, instead of winding round the Scars of the Shire, they practically extinguished it. Wherever the station is there will have to be the road, regardless of groves, grottoes, temples, terraces, or what not. The exigencies of the 'Bus knows nothing of scenery. The consequence of this was, that a very fine triumphal arch, surmounting Gothic lodges, holding massive iron gates of splendid structure, was nearly lost to society; for these are short cut days, and none but an owner cares to go round for the ride. The Duke, however, not being the man to put his candle under a bushel, always took care to air his guests in that direction, and had now fixed upon the "Arch" as the rendezvous for the *battue*. And, as Bagwell,

"With careless steps and slow,"

came over Cherryburn hill,

"The mingling notes came soften'd from below."

If not,

"The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,"

at all events,

"The playful children just let loose from school,"

for old Dame Dunkerley had hurried her brats, through their three R's. (Reading, Riting, and 'Rithmatic), in order that they might bear a hand at the *battue*. And now a curious medley of small boys, armed with scare-crows and hedge-stakes, nearly as tall as themselves, crowd round Mr. Ranger, who, attired in all the pomp of green plush, stands towering in imposing altitude above them. He presently succumbs to the swaggering Mr. Bagwell, and no sooner has the change in command been effected, than a four-wheeled chaise, containing two little haystack-looking men, one topped with a pigeon-pie hat, the other with a drab wide-awake turned up with green, appear outside the imposing gates which, revolving on their easy hinges, the tramp, tramp, tramp, of a good old family horse, sounds on the pavement beneath the massive arch, and is again lost on the gravel of the drive.

The carriage contains Captain Cambo, R.N., and Mr. Humphrey Cheadle, of Lambswool Hill, who though plumpers in person, had split their votes at the last election, a proceeding that the Duke wishes to rectify in future. This he thinks to accomplish by giving them a dinner and a day's shooting; and though the Captain was at first disposed to accept the latter only, yet Mrs. Cambo, or Mrs. Captain Cambo as she calls herself, being, as the Duke says, an "ambitious woman," has persuaded him to go in for both. They are both good shooters, but bad hitters, and Bagwell is not sorry to see them.

And now the fatties having descended from their vehicle and given themselves probationary shakes on reaching the ground, as if to ascertain that they have not left any of their limbs behind them, proceed to unhook and unclasp the integuments that conceal their sporting habiliments, to uncoil their shawl cravats, and discard their Inverness and Hippopotamus Inverness cloaks.

In this metamorphose the shooter is greatly in arrear of the fox-hunter; for as the latter proceeds to dismiss his exterior he reveals improved and becoming apparel, while the shooter too often strips to a mere figure of fun.

Captain Cambo, the gentleman in the pigeon-pie hat, with his scrimpy bright-buttoned green coat, flattening on his puffy peg-top trousers, thrust into old round-toed Hessian boots, is the exact image of our much-respected friend, Paul Pry; and Mr. Humphrey Cheadle has a sort of half-butcher, half-poacher like appearance.

But whom have we in the Whitechapel, drawn by the good-looking roan pony, with a gun popping out, like an ear at either side of the vehicle? Ah, these are Mr. Brown White and Colonel Nettlestead,

both out-and-out Tergiversation men, who do what they are told and ask no questions. They are shooters, and will most likely get a brace of pheasants, and perhaps a hare, to take home with them at the end of the day; but no dinner. They are safe without. Cambo and Cheadle nod to them in a sort of patronising way, as much as to say, we are not one of you yet. Mr. Black White, Mr. Brown White's brother, is not asked; because having ratted from the other side, the Duke thinks there is no fear of his going back again, so he is on the neck of venison list—the lowest of the political feeders.

But the consequence increases. Up trots a pair of horse-registered dog-cart, with smart lamps, shining aprons, coloured sheep-skins, and all complete. In it we have Mr. Tommy, alias Mr. Tonguey Thomson of Airyholme, Mr. George Wheeler of Riverdale, and Mr. Daintry of Swellacres Hall. Tonguey Thomson's tongue never rests, it goes morning, noon, and night, and being of the light falsetto order, is not to be mistaken. It is generally heard before the owner heaves in sight. Tonguey is a good shot, Wheeler a middling one, and Daintry a bad one. Daintry is here, because the Duke understands he has lately been dining at Lavender Tower, and he thinks a day and a dinner may keep him steady. He voted right last time. This new arrival makes seven guns in all which, with the three expected from the Castle, give a tottle of ten, as many as Bagwell would like to find pheasants for.

And now, when the great sportsmen have all got out of their vehicles, and out of their husks, they present a most miscellaneous incongruous assortment, no two of them being in any way alike. If our gallant, and, we believe, unjustly suspected neighbours, the French, were to attempt an invasion and meet such a force on landing, they would never get further for laughing. The scene is like that of a *Bal Masqué*, where each man laughs at his neighbour, without recollecting what an object he is himself. Paul Pry Cambo struts about, staring first at Tonguey Thomson's Glengarry cap and Knicker-bockers, then at Wheeler's duck trowsers and rusty Napoleons, and wondering where Mr. Daintry got his very fine pea-green jacket and white moleskins from. Thinks he must have been expecting to breakfast at the Castle, and intended to captivate the Lady Honoria.

Then as the carriages wheeled off, and the chattering cigar-smoking group lounged about at their ease, Bagwell conned them quietly over, thinking how he should place them, with an eye to his own interest, and the advantage of the bag. And as the cigars of the smokers gradually approached the tips of their noses, watches began to be looked at, and eyes turned towards the distant Castle, where the crimson flag fluttered lazily on the breeze, and the bright sun illuminated the windows, and burnished up the gilt vanes and pinnacles of the towers.

Then Captain Cambo, feeling the chill, began to strut to and fro, as if he were walking the quarter deck, while Tonguey Thomson cocked his Glengarry cap, and chattered on the beauties of punctuality, while Mr. Brown White, who did not like giving his tongue much licence, asked if it was possible they had mistaken the day? "Oh no," "Oh no," was the ready response, whereon some growled, and others looked out for fresh cigars. Bagwell too lighted his pipe, and the smoking became pretty general—for it is safer to smoke than to talk when you are not quite sure of your company.

CHAPTER LV.

THE PRESENTATIONS.

Thereon the Duke of Tergiversation was extremely particular in making his appointments, he was most unpunctual in keeping them; and, notwithstanding he had requested the sturdy Squires to be at the Triumphal Arch at "ten minutes to eleven—ten minutes to eleven, *punctually*, if they pleased," he was so taken up with his papers, and the Prince with the Lady Honoria, that it was a quarter to twelve ere the two, with Lord Marchhare for vis-à-vis, left the Castle in the carriage-and-four for the scene of action, and then proceeded at a slow pace through the glades and windings of the Park, in order to enable his Grace to point out the beauties and extent of the place. His Grace was on the high horse that day. Meanwhile the Squires had begun to be rather growly, looked at their watches, and looked at the sky, and talked about losing the best part of the day.

"*Sail, ahoo!*" at length cried Captain Cambo, who was still on the quarter-deck, as the yellow livery of the out-rider rounded Holling Green wood, whereupon murmuring tongues were silenced, and all eyes turned to where the scarlet-jacketed postillions were g—e—e—ntly rising in their stirrups to the piloting of the yellow guide.

"Here they come!" was then the cry, and animation was infused into the late muttering, murmuring group.

On the carriage came, at an easy airing-like pace, looking as though it were Midsummer-day, and that there was no one concerned in the drive but themselves. Presently the red vest of the out-rider was visible, next his red collar and cuffs, and then the bright, closely arranged buttons of the postillions' jackets began to glitter in the sun. A jerk of the head, with a wave of the whip-hand of the out-rider, now showed where the carriage was going to set down at the Lodges, when up it presently came, amid a general hoist of pigeon-pie hats,

wide-awakes, Glengarries, and other head-coverings. All was then condescension and politeness.

The carriage having drawn up in good form, two highly powdered footmen in the rumble were presently at the door, the noiseless steps unfolded, and the well muffled up trio descended and entered Mr. Ranger's lodge to unwrap and prepare themselves. That ceremony over, with the aid of Mrs. Ranger, the Duke presently appeared dressed in a full suit of heather-coloured Tweed, with a muffin-cap of a similar material on his head, now ushering the bearded Prince, who was attired in a very splendid Lancer-like gold-laced green foraging-cap with a square patent leather peak, a tightish fitting green tunic buttoning down the front and secured at the waist by a black patent leather gold or gilt lion-headed clasped belt. Greenish tinged doe-skin trousers, and leather-topped buttoned boots of a similar hue, encased his Highness's extremities, altogether a very different costume to that of the banditti-looking party to whom he was now about to be presented, or rather who were now to be presented, to his Highness. A general stare and flutter ensued as the great men emerged from the Lodge on the left of the Arch, and the little boys jumped up, and stood on tip-toe, or pressed past taller people in order to get a sight of the hero.

Then the ceremony of shaking hands, and grinning, and welcoming, and inquiring after wives and families, had to be undertaken by the Duke under the doubly disadvantageous circumstance of not being very sure of his men at any time, even in their usual attire, let alone in the grotesque costume many of them had now assumed.

Every great man should be allowed a "Remembrancer," a person to prompt, and tell him who people are, and hint their peculiarities as they approach; for they all expect to be properly identified for ever after an introduction, thinking because they remember the stranger, that the stranger must remember them, forgetful of the fact that they have but one face to digest and remember, whereas the stranger has a whole host. Who doesn't know the difficulty of "who's who-ing," a field of fox-hunters after an introduction, and again of identifying the same parties in an evening?

Candidates at elections always have a smart somebody at their elbows to tell them who people are, and perhaps indicate their peculiarities, as, for instance, this corpulent gentleman with the green cutaway-coat and buff waistcoat is Mr. Stopgap the master of the Mugginsworth harriers, and forthwith Mr. Embryo, M.P., begins ingratiating himself by inquiring first after the health of Mrs. Stopgap, and all the little Stopgaps (twelve in number); then after the hounds, with hopes that they "continue to show the sport for which they have always been famous"—a good safe venture, seeing that if they have never shown any, the hope will be right. Or if the approacher is a sour, sombre, cadaverous-looking gentleman, with perhaps a tract

peeping out of his long, puritanical coat-pocket, the prompter will say, this is Mr. Soberton, the great teetotaler, whereupon the candidate revolves the circle of his ideas, and up turns a dissertation on the virtues of temperance, and anathemas against Brandy and Beer-shops, wine and spirits generally. So the smiling gentleman passes from grave to gay, from lively to severe, each voter feeling the full force of his compliments. How much better this is than calling Mr. Riffield Mr. Driffield, asking after a man's children who has none, or hoping Mr. Bolter's good lady, who has just been Sir Cresswell Cresswell'd, is quite well.

But we are keeping our great men waiting, and this too on a fine but cool winter's day, so let us operate upon the group at the Lodge.

A Prince being a rarity anywhere, and the Duke intending to make capital out of the visit, was most particular in sowing the seeds of his

crop by bringing up all those whom he thought were to be influenced by a flattering presentation—First he called up Mr. Daintry, the second swell of the party, and introduced him as his "excellent friend and neighbour Daintry," whereupon the Prince gesticulated—was much proud to make Daintry's acquaintance, and asked him "at vot time of year his ewes lambed?" Before Daintry could hit upon the answer, Mr. Wheeler was brought forward, and was put through his facings; then Captain Cambo, next Humphrey Cheadle, and finally Tonguey Thomson was hounded upon him, from whom the Prince at length got an answer to the question he had propounded to all the rest, namely, "Vot time of de year his ewes lambed?"

Brown White, and Colonel Nettlestead alone were unpresented.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE BATTUE.

While Tonguey Thomson was buttonholeing the Prince, telling him about his ewes, and Jackey Jones's ewes, and somebody else's ewes, Mr. Bagwell stepped forward with one of those exuberant military salutes which generally denote that the donors take their change in the way of impudence out of other people, and then most respectfully submitted the programme of the day's performance to the Duke.

Ever since Lord Brougham unbagged the schoolmaster, and sent him on his travels, there has been a growing tendency to shed ink until it has become almost impossible to arrange the simplest transaction without a great consumption of paper. Every one wants to show off in his own particular line. So Bagwell got Rodwell, the village-schoolmaster of Skelperton, to draw him an elaborate plan of the cover and country, showing two different modes of attack, one of which plans was emblazoned with a triumphant pheasant, the other with a lethargic-looking hare, both thought at Skelperton to be perfect triumphs of the art. Alas, for the aspirations of mankind! The Duke having glanced at them, cut short all discussion by handing them back, saying, "Take us where we will get the best shooting." So Bagwell and Rodwell, and all the population of Skelperton were cushioned with as little respect as is paid to a petition in Parliament. Bagwell having restored the plans to their smart blue case, gave a chuck of the head to Ranger, who forthwith dived into his Lodge, and presently emerged with an armful of guns for the use of the distinguished trio. These being duly distributed among the loaders, his Grace, with a slight inclination of the head and wave of the hand to

the Prince, put himself at the head of the party, and led the way to the scene of action.

Of course, as in showing a house, or a club, or a castle, nobody begins with the best rooms first, but draw the guests on through gradually increasing splendour, until they end in—say—St. George's Hall, at Windsor, or in that most extraordinary production the banqueting-room in the Pavilion at Brighton, so the Duke did not dive at once into the thick of his pheasants, but nibbled a little at the outskirts, going from middling covers to better, from better to good, and from good to capital. The first the invading army halted before was South Rippleford, a long plantation of about thirty years' growth, with a tolerable crop of fern, privet, and brushwood generally. It was some five or six acres of generally even width, close at top, and not very good travelling.

Here then they all halted on the green sward to receive arms and arrange the form of attack. Gun to his Highness, gun to the Duke, gun to Lord Marchhare. The first thing that struck the assembled group was the extreme laxity with which his Highness handled his implement. Now, it is all very well for great men to condescend, but there is no occasion to carry their familiarity to their guns, and it struck both Captain Cambo and Mr. Brown White, that there was very little to choose between being shot by a poacher or a Prince. The Duke, however, trusting these matters to Bagwell, just as he trusted the hounds to Haggish, took it for granted that all was right, so placed his distinguished guest in the post of honour, and the rest of the party having fallen into line, his Grace gave the signal to Bagwell to commence the attack, and lead them to glory, despite the want of the barley.

We do not wish to say anything unpolite, but we do think there seems something rather akin to placing the twenty-pounder against the pig-sty door, this bringing such an array of men, boys, beaters, loaders, and guns against a lot of birds, which, though handsome and ornamental, are not the most sagacious in the world. In fact, a pheasant, of all the game tribe, is the least self-provident—for though they can run pretty fast, yet when they come to fly it must be an indifferent shot who can't knock them over—while the way in which they show themselves on their feeding-places, and the proclamations they make of their whereabouts at nights, are perfectly "unpardonable," as the old gamekeeper said.

However, it does not do for guests to find fault with their host's entertainment, so having come to a *battue* we must make the best of the business. The beaters are into the cover, the line is formed, so let us advance.

Now an unwonted clatter, and cries of cock, cock, cock, resound through the wood, scaring the cushets, and causing alarm among the denizens generally. Meanwhile all eyes are strained, and guns kept ready cocked, eager for the excitement of the "first shot."

Now an unusual clatter resounds across the cover, and—*Bang!* there it goes to Mr. Brown White's gun.

"Rabbit!" cries Ranger, adding, "smallest donation thankfully received," as the boy brings it up.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three guns all in a row. Two hares killed by Wheeler and Col. Nettlestead, and a hen pheasant well missed by Captain Cambo.

W-h-i-r-r! Up goes a great gollaring red-eyed cock pheasant from the ground, right in a line with the Prince.

Bang! goes his Highness half at the noise, half at the object.

"Good miss," cries the Duke letting drive, and missing also.

Bang! Bang! Bang! go three or four guns, blowing a hen pheasant all to atoms, followed by cries of "Captain Cambo! *Do* keep in line!"

Bang! Bang! again, the Prince's gun has gone off incontinently, the charge ploughing up the ground, a few paces in front of a fustian-clad beater. The second gun was that of Mr. Daintry, who let drive at an owl, thinking it was a woodcock.

On, on the invaders go, up fly the game, *bang* go the guns, as either fur or feathers happen to appear.

And now the fugitive pheasants having run the cover's utmost limits, are at length ensconsced amidst the ground feathering spruce and hollies, at the high end of the plantation, and the shooters emerge to take up favourable positions for the final destruction. Clatter, clatter, clatter, go the beaters, and after one or two solitary *w-h-i-r-r-h-s*, the rest rise as it were in a cloud, and going up like rockets come down like dumplings to the *bang, bang, bangings* of the guns.

So South Rippleford is shot, and the parties after recounting their individual success, and excusing their misses, enjoin Captain Cambo to keep better in line, and proceed to Yeavering Hill, rejoicing. Here the same sort of scene ensued, with the exception that the sportsmen encircled the clump, and the game being driven out in all directions, the shooting was more short, sharp, and decisive. There was plenty of firing for every one, and the steady shooting of Mr. Brown White and others made up for the missing of their companions. From the clump they marched to the Nightingale Shades' Wood, into which they had scarcely entered ere Mr. Humphrey Cheadle viewed a fox, who came stealing along in a sort of half-cautious, half-careless, way that as good as said, "I think these are not my enemies."

"Look out, Prince!" cried Tonguey Thomson, thinking to afford his Highness a rich treat, when the latter mistaking his meaning, levelled his gun, and doubled poor Reynard up in a minute. Then came such wailing and lamentation and such surprise on the part of the Prince, that he was not complimented on his prowess, while the Duke endeavoured to soothe matters, and get parties dispersed on their beats. At length they left the fallen hero, and the *bang, bang, banging* of the guns was presently resumed on the legitimate objects of their care.

So they shot the Nightingale Shades, and proceeded to the Wiltshire Walk Wood, then to the Juniper Banks, and afterwards to Willowdale Glen. Here the powdered footmen appeared in the hermit's cave—an open-fronted room cut out in a rock, with a rustic table well supplied with sandwiches, sherry, soda water, and so on. Then the victorious army halted, and the piles of provisions suddenly diminished, while the subdued pop, pop, popping of the corks supplied the place of the *bang, bang, banging* of the guns. And still the talk was of what each had done, what wonderful shots they had made, and how they could not help missing those that they had. Taking their own words for it, there was not a bad shot in the party. And now exhausted nature being recruited, they looked to their fire-arms, and prepared for the *bon bouche* of the day—the range of the crack cover, the Duchess's Grove. This was formed of tall stately oaks, carrying their wood well up, without taking more room for their tops than was absolutely necessary. Some oaks are very unreasonable, and spread themselves out like cauliflowers, or like ladies' crinoline, never considering that there is any one to be accommodated but themselves. In this respect they somewhat resemble the newspaper monopolists at the Clubs, who tuck the *Post* into the *Times*, sit on the *News*, and impale old *Punch* under their elbows on the tables. The oaks in the Duchess's Grove, grew nobly and well, just as Mr. Bunting's ought to have done if they had gone for the good of their master. Many Duchesses had reigned in the Castle since they were planted, and many more would reign ere they arrived at maturity. It is trees such as these that deceive people as to the relative value of their wood. A man reads of, say, six acres of oak selling for six thousand pounds, and forthwith he jumps to the conclusion, that his forty acres at Haggarmoss, that have been going back these twenty years, are worth the same—forty thousand pounds! whereas perhaps they are not worth a thousand. Again, a man hears of another having cut down a thousand oak trees, and estimating them all by the value of such as we are now about to enter, reckons them roundly at five pounds a-piece—five thousand pounds! and it is wonderfully surprising to hear that they are only worth a hundred. Our friend Admiral Bunting is not the only man who has been deceived by this sort of property.

The Duchess's Grove, in addition to its fine crop of oak, had a beautiful undergrowth of healthy hazel, with abundance of shelter from briars and brambles. Here too were patches of sedgy grass for the accommodation of the hare and rabbit, so that altogether it was well reserved for the grand finale. The line being again formed, it seemed the evident desire of all parties to give the Prince a wide berth, for his random style of shooting, was not at all considered as conducive to safety.

The *bang, bang, banging*, was soon resumed, the clamour increasing in intensity as the invaders advanced up the wood, until the noise

resembled the skirmishing of troops in Hyde Park on a field day. It was now fine shooting, for the pheasants rose clear and straight, giving each sportsman his fair unmistakeable mark. A man who could not hit one of these, had no business to waste his substance on a licence. The Prince blazed away most assiduously, frightening them well if he did not hit them.

The wood ran out into a broad double hedge-row, whose high banks were riddled with rabbits, and studded with every description of scrubby unprofitable brush-wood, stunted birch, shabby holly, dwarfy beech, the whole plentifully mixed with blackthorn, brambles, and box-bushes. To this last refuge came all the runaway pheasants, hoping for peace and safety at last, a calculation that was grievously disappointed by the shooters forming on either side, while a few diminutive urchins were sent in to beat every bush and nook in the place. Up they flew in volleys, and volleys of shot responded to the sound. The guns could hardly be loaded quick enough.

At length the fire began to slacken, and gradually to die out, Lord Marchhare giving, like the fiddler in the rejected addresses, a "tiny flourish still," by firing at an unfortunate rabbit that popped out precaturely. This closed the grand *battue*. The sport was over, and nothing remained but to recapitulate their respective performances, and count the game.

Then the great Mr. Bagwell again rose to importance, and stepping forward to relieve the Prince of his gun, hoped His Royal Highness had had a satisfactory day, whereupon the Prince assured him that he had, and slipped a couple of shillings wrapped up in tissue-paper into his hand, which Bagwell conveyed to his waistcoat-pocket with the dexterity of a railway porter, feeling perfectly satisfied that he had got a couple of sovereigns. And not too much either for a Prince to give, thought Bag, who had had some sort of mental conflict whether he wouldn't be good for a "fi' pun' note." The Duke and Lord Marchhare then surrendered their arms, and there was a general grounding of guns.

Last scene of all in this brave *battue* was the counting of the killed. All the pickers-up having come in and contributed their quota, the accumulated slaughter was strewn on the green sward. Cock pheasants, hen pheasants, hares, rabbits, snipes, woodcocks, wood-pigeons huddled hand over head in promiscuous confusion, from which, however, they were speedily extricated by throwing out a separate sample of each, and then dealing the rest to it like a person sorting a pack of cards. Then Mr. Bagwell, with an eye to the paragraph, having jobbed some twenty brace of pheasants from his fox-supplying friend in Leadenhall Street, introducing them stealthily into the heap, so that when the final announcement came to be made, the result was pronounced to be very satisfactory—seventy brace of pheasants, forty-three hares, three brace of woodcocks, ten couple of rabbits, one owl,

and a fox. Write ninety brace of pheasants, sixty hares, ten brace of woodcocks, and twenty couple of rabbits, muttered his Grace to Mr. Bagwell, adding, as he returned to his companions, "*that's diplomacy.*" And when the return appeared in the country paper on the Saturday following, the Earl of Musk and Lavender was extremely surprised, and wondered how his "noble friend" managed so well without the barley. And when Mr. Bagwell packed up the return pheasants, he too said, "that's diplomacy," though he did not exactly know the meaning of the term.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE PROVINCIALS.

But where and oh where, in the midst of all this Princing and this pop, crack, banging, are our heros Jack and Jasper gone? The latter, to be sure, we have recently seen in connection with his little bill and his race-horse; but Mr. Bunting has been lost sight of, while waiting for that time when "Mamma would be glad to see him," as intimated by Miss Rosa and confirmed by her prudent parent herself at the Rocks. The reader, perhaps, will not attach much importance to Lord Marchhare's attentions to Miss Rosa, though they had undoubtedly the effect of consoling her for Mr. Bunting's absence. Our friend Jasper was still looked upon as the ultimate harbour of refuge if nothing better could be done; but in this enterprising gad-about world there is no saying what a day or an hour may produce. Jasper of course had the run of Privett Grove in a domestic cat sort of way, but there was no pressing or hinting that he ought to be offering. If the Bunting funds had not gone up, the Goldspink ones had rather fallen, and Mrs. McDermott would like a little more information about Mr. Bunting, if she only knew where to get it.

Cupid has the advantage over all other sportsmen in his season being continuous. His arrow flies as freely in the frosts of winter as in the heat of summer. Winter had now established her full supremacy, the trees and hedges were leafless, and would-be sportsmen had now no excuse left for not taking the field in pursuance of the summer announcements. Some men are desperately keen so long as the corn is in the ground. Our friend Mr. Bunting, though not a "six days a-week, and more if possible man," could hunt a little just as he could shoot a little, and fish a little, especially when so doing would forward his views in other respects. Though absent, he was still true to the pretty hat, and longed for the day when he would be restored to its company. Meanwhile he spun several yards of bad verse in praise of our beauty.

As hunting runs a good deal in streams, the current of which generally sets one way, all for the grass, a man may make many inquiries in London ere he gets much information respecting a remote country. Of course if he falls in with a man of the land he will hear how the Scrambleford are the finest hounds in the world, how there is no such huntsman as Tootles, how their country is next to the Quorn, and a chap who can go over it can go anywhere; but for any reliable directions as to quarters and so on, he might as well ask what hounds there are in the moon.

Mr. Bunting felt the full force of this observation, as in the course of his peregrinations he varied the usual conversation about the weather, by asking any hunting-man with whom he came in contact, if he could tell him anything about the Duke of Tergiversation's hounds.

"Why yes, Sir Sampson Scamper knew there was such a pack, because he saw them advertised, but where they hunted he hadn't the slightest idea in the world. Didn't 'spose they were a pack that any body ever went to see—rig'lar provincials—he made no doubt."

"Why, what the deuce can *you* want with the Duke of Tergiversation's hounds?" exclaimed Mr. Rowley Rushington, on being interrogated on the same subject—"Why what the deuce can you want with the Duke of Tergiversation's hounds?" repeated he, eyeing Mr. Bunting suspiciously.

"Oh, nothing," quoth he, "nothing particular, see them, that's all," stuttered our conscience-stricken hero, trying to turn the conversation.

"Oh fiddle-de-dee; one pack is very much like another now-a-days. If you want to hunt, go into a good country—costs no more than a bad one—not so much generally."

So Mr. Bunting profited very little by his inquiries, and felt it advisable to discontinue them.

Of course, if a man goes into a country solely for hunting, his best plan is first to ascertain where the kennel is, and then to look out for accommodation somewhere in the neighbourhood, but in a case of this sort, where the hunting was a secondary consideration—indeed subservient to something else—the plan was to see what locality would be most convenient to the something else.

For this purpose Mr. Bunting conned the large map of the country hanging against the wall of the sinecure library, or rather sleeping-room of the Polyanthus Club, putting his fore-finger on the modestly denoted Privett Grove, and then casting about for the Castle, Mayfield, and other familiar though yet unexplored places. He felt himself quite at home with them, though he had never seen them, so often had he talked them over with Miss and Mamma, when—

"With them conversing, he," &c.

Mayfield was certainly what the country-people call most "contagious" to Privett Grove—but then it was wide of the castle, added to which our friend would have to encounter his fat rival with his dirty five-pound notes at every turn and corner. Heatherfield was nearer the Castle, but wide of the railway, and Cotfield Court did not seem likely to be large enough to accommodate a gentleman of his luxurious requirements. Burton St. Leger seemed larger, and a reference to a certain expensive topographical dictionary, showed that it boasted three inns, viz., the Marquis of Cornwallis, the Saracen's Head, and the Malt Shovel. Upon the whole therefore, after mature deliberation, and all the available information he could obtain about the Duke's derided country, he determined to throw himself upon the resources of Burton St. Leger. To this end he then began to prepare himself, and ultimately made the arrangement we shall presently disclose.

CHAPTER LVIII.

CAPTAIN CAVENDISH CHICHESTER'S HORSES.

The benevolence of the Londoners with regard to their horses can only be fully appreciated by those who are aware how much those excellent people are in the habit of giving things away. Not a number of "*The Times*" do we take up without finding some most excellent offer, a steady cob, equal to carry a castle, without fault or blemish, to be parted with for one quarter his value to insure a good master and a comfortable home.

"A highly broken lady's horse to be disposed of or lent, subject to approval, with any trial allowed, either on the road or in the riding-school."

Next, "A gentleman having a pair of well-bred, handsome grey horses, will lend them until the summer, or sell them at a great sacrifice. They are 15 hands 3 inches high, five and six years old, quiet in single and double harness, and quiet to ride; will carry ladies; also good hunters, step well together; have grand action, with light mouth, and temperate; splendid Brougham or phaeton horses; sold together or separately with their suits of clothes. Warranted sound, and one month's trial given. To save trouble, no dealer need apply."—A useless exclusion, seeing that none would be weak enough to do so; but then it looks as if the tender-hearted owner merely wanted to secure good quarters for his dumb favourites, where he could occasionally have the pleasure of seeing or hearing of them. And what does the reader think the disinterested party asks for these pieces of perfection—these "Matthew's at home" of horses—five and six years

old; own brothers most likely, in the prime of life—"Three hundred guineas?" as Tattersall would say. Two hundred and fifty? Two hundred? A hundred and seventy-five? A hundred and fifty? A hundred? A paltry hundred! No, not even a hundred—ninety guineas! Ninety guineas is all that is asked for a pair of well-bred handsome horses, that can do everything, and a month's trial allowed. What can be fairer or more liberal! With three such offers, a man might have his season's job for nothing. First the grays, then the bays, and next, perhaps, the silver roans. In fact, the Cockneys are so soft and generous that they are always wishing to oblige other people with their horses. Their kindness in this matter exceeds all belief. They are always offering. That splendid brook-jumper Topthorne, seems to be getting lent or given away every day. Somehow the offers all run upon horses. We never see a good cow, or a carriage to be lent, or a fat pig to be sold for half price.

That there are a great many well-to-do people ready to avail themselves of such bargains is evident by the number and pertinacity of the advertisements. Even our friend Mr. Bunting was not above accepting a handsome offer of the sort.

Whatever a man's mind is running upon, to that point will he naturally turn his attention when perusing his paper. Thus, if he is thinking of his beloved "Consols," he "at's" the City article first, sees whether they are on the rise or the fall; if he wants a cook, he skims the "want places" advertisements; if a grand pianoforte, he knows where to go; the same with regard to coals, candles, carpets, or what not.

Our friend Mr. Bunting's too susceptible mind running a good deal on spurs and Spanish hats, caused him to look occasionally into the second page of "*The Times*" Supplement, perhaps to see if there was anything likely to suit his charmer, who had frequently expressed a desire to have a fine horse with thin legs, and a flowing mane and tail instead of her pony. As luck would have it, just at the time of the Tergiversation trip an advertisement appeared in the usual column, stating that in consequence of a bad fall out hunting, a gentleman would be glad to lend his "two splendid hunters, Owen Ashford and The Exquisite, to any one for a month or six weeks, who would ride them fairly, and keep them in condition," an offer that does not occur every day just in the cream of the hunting season; and though our friend had about made up his mind that his own two horses would do all the dangerous he was equal to, he nevertheless, after considering it a little, got into one of Cutbush's safety cabs and bowled away to the indicated quarter, viz., Sligo Mews, Rochester Square, there to see these magnificent animals. Arrived at the Square, he paid his fare, popped out of the vehicle, and, with the slip of paper in his hand on which he had written down the address, began asking his way to Sligo Mews. Police constable 49 B pointed it out to him, and away he went as directed.

It was not a very inviting locality, and appeared worse in consequence of the sudden transition from the openness of the Square to its contracted limits. It was a long narrow alley running the whole length of the Square, interspersed with dunghills, dairies, coal-sheds, and cabbage-shops, with here and there a marine-store-dealer. As Mr. Bunting wended his way, taking care of his boots, the women looked at him and smiled, as if there was something unusual about him, but when he paused at 51 A, and began asking in a loud and audible voice for "Peter Crankey, Captain Cavendish Chichester's groom," there was an increased supply of plain or ringlets at the windows and doors, with more smiling and putting of aprons up to the mouth.

"Where shall I find Peter Crankey, Captain Cavendish Chichester's groom?" demanded Mr. Bunting, wondering what they were giggling at—"Where shall I find Peter Crankey, Captain Cavendish Chichester's groom?" repeated he, reading the address from his slip of paper.

"Touch the bell above your head, Sir!—Touch the bell! above your head, Sir!" exclaimed a chimney-sweep from a window over the way, and looking up, Mr. Bunting saw the half-rod, half-chain of a little bell-pull dangling at the white door-post beside him. He gave it a gentle pull, and stood waiting for the result. Scarcely had it concluded its tinkle ere a rustle up the adjoining entry announced an approach, and a man came, settling himself into a greasy gray coat as he walked.

He was not at all a prepossessing looking person, nor at all the sort of groom that one would expect to find attached to the person of such an aristocratically named Captain. He looked like a cross between a circus-man, a dog-stealer, a cow-leech, and a besom-maker. In person he was about six feet high, but awkward and ill-proportioned, close clipped, clean shaved, and moustached, with a green patch over his right eye, and all the roguery of the two compressed into his left one. That indeed was a piercer, and Mr. Bunting felt rather nervous as its ill-omened lustre settled fully upon him. He inwardly resolved whatever he did about the horses he wouldn't borrow the groom.

"You be come to see our nags, I 'spose," observed the man, giving his greasy vest-pockets an external squeeze for the key, and then diving deep into his baggy broad patterned brown cord ones. From the right pocket he then fished up the ring-key, which he quickly applied to the lock of the newly-painted pea-green door, hallooing out, "Matthew Andrew! Matthew Andrew!" as he opened it.

"Walk in, Sir! walk in!" continued Peter, in a peremptory sort of tone, as our hero rather hesitated on the threshold—"walk in, Sir, *do*," and Mr. Bunting, remembering the dislike these gentry have to a breath of fresh air in the stables, and wishing perhaps to escape the criticisms of the now gathering crowd, almost involuntarily complied,

trusting to the publicity of the place for not being murdered. The door was closed and bolted inside as soon as he was well in, and an attenuated gimmified-looking lad, attired in a full suit of dirty fustians,

came crawling headforemost down the loft-ladder in reply to the summons for "Matthew Andrew."

"Open the window-shutter," said Peter, adjusting his stable-cap on his grizzly head as the lad reached the ground, and while the boy was obeying his master's orders, with the aid of a pitchfork, Peter drew back the brown-holland curtain of another long slip of a window further on, and threw a general light upon the scene.

It wasn't so bad as it seemed, and barring a certain smell, more resembling that of a chemist's shop than a stable, there was nothing remarkable about it. It contained three stalls, two of which were

occupied by horses, the other with fodder, while a goodish hat with a new cockade hung conspicuously against the back wall.

"Humph!" mused Mr. Bunting, eyeing the whole, and thinking perhaps, Peter might not be so great a ruffian when properly dressed to attend on his master. He certainly did not look well then. It was now that great master of arts' turn to operate, and hitching up his baggy shorts, and giving his tell-tale nose a rub across the back of his hand, he fixed his evil eye upon our watchful friend, and proceeded to make a mental estimate of his character. Peter thought Bunting looked soft, but he might be hard for all that, and it behoved Peter to be circumspect.

"Well now," said he, nodding towards the horses, "there be the nags. In all humane probability you'll know the cause o' their bein' in this 'ere unfortunate perdicament," scanning Bunting attentively as he spoke.

"Why yes, your master has had an accident, hasn't he?" asked Bunting, remembering the terms of the advertisement.

"Bad accident, *bad* accident, *werry*," replied Peter, shaking his head. "No fault o' the 'osses though, I must say that," continued he, vindicating the character of his quadruped. "I measured the bruck, and there was near nine yards o' water, with a werry rotten takin' off—in fact, one that none but Matt.* Mytton and my master would ever have thought o' ridin' at, but these 'ere yong gents will be fust or nowhere, and indeed I werry much fears that it may put him nowhere," Peter applying the corner of a very dirty old red cotton kerchief to his roguish eye as he spoke.

"Then he wants to lend them for a time in consequence of the fall?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"He wants to lend them for a time in consequence of the fall," repeated Peter, delighted to see that Bunting was swallowing the bait—"the Avertisement," said he, pulling a *Times* Supplement out of his pocket, "says for a month or six weeks, but, 'atwixt you and I," continued he, nudging Mr. Bunting confidentially, with his elbow, "I da'say whoever gets them may keep them to the end o' the season."

"What, he's much hurt, is he?" asked Mr. Bunting consolingly.

"Oh, despert, despert," replied Peter, with a frown, and an ominous shake of his head—"spine, I should say—spine," putting his right hand on his own back—"doctor says 'No,' but I says 'Yes,' and I werry much fear I shall be right," Peter applying the dirty ball of kerchief again to his blear eye as he spoke.

It was now clear that Mr. Bunting was going to bite, so as soon as his feelings could be properly composed, Peter restored the kerchief to his pocket, and turning to the boy said, with an air of authority, "Strip that 'oss."

* "Jack" we suppose the worthy meant.

Forthwith the young vagabond, rushing up to the horse's side, seized the straps with his teeth, and undoing the buckles, very soon had sheet, and blankets, and roller, and hood sweeping over his quarters and down his bang tail.

"There! there!" exclaimed Peter, extending his right arm in an attitude of admiration, "that is the Hexquisite, the best of the two, for I disdains the dealers' hartifix o' showing an inferior hanimal fust."

The Exquisite certainly was a beautiful animal, a bay, or rather something between a bay and a mouse colour, the horse having been clipped or shaved, giving it that good firm condition those operations impart. He had a small well set on head, a good intelligent eye, lengthy shoulders and quarters, with large clean muscular legs. Altogether a very superior looking animal.

"Go hup to 'im, Sir! Go hup to 'im," said Peter encouragingly, and Mr. Bunting, albeit not very fond of strange horses, went sneaking up the stall to where the boy now had hold of the Exquisite by the head.

"Quiet as a lamb!—Quiet as a lamb! Child might ride 'im!" continued Peter, as the horse began snuffling and smelling at our friend. "Sixteen 'ands zactly," said Peter, as Bunting began chinning him—"sixteen 'ands zactly—he's the 'oss to carry a man out o' the dirt, and make the fences look small. I'm dashed if there's anything too big to stop 'im—anything in reason and moderation at least. In cos, if gents will ride at navigable rivers or harms o' the sea, they will get into grief, whatever they're on; but for a man as treats an 'oss as an 'oss, and not as a hengine, that is the one that can give satisfaction. There! throw the rug over 'im, boy, and strip Howen Hashford," now continued Peter, shifting his position to the back of the next stall.

"Oh, thank you," replied Mr. Bunting, coming gingerly out from beside the Exquisite, "I won't trouble you to do that, I dare say I can see all I want as he stands."

"Well, Sir, wot you please, Sir," replied Peter, rather chopfallen, fearing Bunting was going to back out, "only I shouldn't be a doin' o' my master justice if I didn't *offer* to show 'im. Better strip 'im," continued he coaxingly—"better strip 'im. No trouble. Come, boy, look sharp! strip 'im at once!"

Matthew Andrew then at the clothing with his teeth as before, and very soon had Owen Ashford in his "when unadorned, adorned the most" state.

Notwithstanding Peter's assertion to the contrary, Owen was the handsomer horse of the two; a beautiful dapple gray, with an arch neck, and a splendidly set on tail. If it hadn't been that he was to be lent, there might perhaps have been a slight imputation of ginger. Bunting conned him quietly over, not caring to contradict the groom as to the relative merits of the two, and thinking how well he would look upon either. At length Bunting spoke—

"Well, they are two very nice horses," said he.

"They are two werry nice 'osses," replied Peter. "No man need wish for no better. Put the clothing on, boy," continued Peter, addressing the lad.

Bunting then drew back a pace or two, and contemplated them from beside the cockaded hat.

"And they are to be lent," said he, after a pause.

"To be lent," repeated Peter, slowly and deliberately, feeling that they were drawing up to the critical point. "To be lent, that is to say," continued he, scrutinising Bunting, "lent to a gent as is not over heavy, and will ride them fairly and well."

"I dare say I can do that," observed Mr. Bunting—who had a pretty good opinion of his horsemanship.

"Well I don't know but you can," replied Peter, diving his hands into his greasy breeches pockets—"as well as any as has been to look at 'em yet, I dare say."

"What, you've had some other parties after them, have you?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"I believe I *have*," replied Peter, winking his eye at our friend—"Chaps of all sorts and sizes—great, bulky, barge-like fellers, and little bits of bodies that could 'ardly 'old a cat together. There was a Mr. Percival Dobbin, from Ball's Pond, or some such queer place 'ere, not 'alf an hour afore you came, who looked more like the mark nor any on 'em, but I should say he's a good stun 'eavier nor you, and altogether, he wasn't quite a man to my mind."

This information rather quickened the pulse of Mr. Bunting's aspirations. He wouldn't like to let Dobbin have the horses.

"Then you and he didn't deal?" asked he.

"We didn't deal, and we didn't not deal," replied Peter, with a chuck of the chin. "I told him I should give him an answer the day arter tomorrow."

"Well, but have you power to make the arrangement without referring to your master?" asked Mr. Bunting, thinking that "quick" was the word.

"Power! to be sure I 'ave the power," smiled Peter, "I've lived man and boy these forty years in the famly, and if I ha'n't power to make an arrangement, I don't know who 'as."

This rather threw a light on the matter. Peter was evidently an old family servant, hence his one eye and disregard of appearances. Perhaps his young master had put his eye out.

"Then the horses are ready to start at any time?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"Any time, any time," replied Peter, "arter we get 'greed: to-morrow morning, if you like."

"Well, I don't know why we shouldn't agree," observed Mr. Bunting, half to himself and half to the man.

"Nor I," assented Peter, carelessly, adding, "if you give me a reverence, I makes no doubt I shall find all right."

"Well, my name is Bunting—Mr. John Bunting; I am a member of the Polyanthus Club, and of the Tearaway hunt," producing a card of his Club as he spoke, and handing it to Peter, who received and pocketed it in silence.

"Then you'll do nothing with Dobbin till you see me again?" observed Mr. Bunting, sidling to and fro, with his hands in his peg-top trowser pockets.

"Nothin' with Dobbin till I see you again," assented Peter, adding to Matthew Andrew! "Light the gas, boy."

Mr. Bunting having then taken his tiny umbrella from the top of the corn-bin, next began sucking its ivory knob, thinking if there was anything else he could do. He thought not. Yet stay, give the fellow a sovereign, and that will keep matters straight, so saying he dipped his forefinger and thumb into his waistcoat-pocket, and fishing up a sovereign, found Crankey's hand attracted to his on the instant. It jinked into his pocket just as the boy lit the jet of the gas, and Peter then unlocking the door, bowed Mr. Bunting out, hoping to have the pleasure of seeing him the next day.

CHAPTER LIX.

AN EQUITABLE ARRANGEMENT.

It is a remarkable fact that we never met any one yet who liked to be laughed at, and though the gathering gloom of a wintry day was fast shrouding the passenger from observation, our friend Mr. Bunting on leaving Captain Cavendish Chichester's stables, bolted out at the other end of the Mews, in order to avoid the invidious gaze of the aprons by the way that he came. The exit end gained, a short street to the right led him back to the cheerful regions of Rochester Square, on the reverse side to that on which he before entered. Day was now about done, oil and gas were usurping the place of the mist-obscured sun, and careful servants were shutting the shutters, while the me-a-u of the milk-maid, and call of the crumpet-man began to awaken the areas.

It is a good thing for a mind-perplexed man to get away from the scene of contention, and Rochester Square formed a healthy and agreeable contrast to the fetid smells of Sligo Mews.

Mr. Bunting was now enabled to take a calm and dispassionate view of the matter. Here was an offer that seemed almost like a god-send to aid his endeavours with his incomparable charmer. True, the groom

was not very good, but the horses were magnificent, and looking at such animals made him more sensible of the imperfections of his own. He thought he oughtn't to miss such a chance, and yet he didn't exactly see how he could manage it. Four horses would be of no use to him with his mild style of riding, besides which he wouldn't like to go about with a man with one eye. The slang cry of "There you go with your eye out!" occurred to his recollection. He would like to dispense with Crankey if he could. The question was, how to manage it. At length a thought struck him. If I could get Captain Cavendish Chichester to exchange horses for a time, it might answer both our purposes; I should get my riding, and he would get his horses kept in wind, and condition, and the catage of the one could be set off against the catage of the other. "Dash it! if I don't think that will do," said he, delighted at his cleverness, and liking the proposition the more he thought of it. He took a rapid turn round the entire Square, and having conned the point well, decided it would do; at all events that he would make the proposal. "And why not at once?" asked he. "Why not, indeed?" was the answer he gave himself. That point settled, he right-about-faced, and again made for the little street by which he had re-entered the Square, and was speedily back in the gloom of Sligo Mews. Faint glow-worm-like candles flickered here and there, varied by an occasional stable-lantern, or the red fire of the itinerant pie or roast-chestnut man. Having taken his bearings pretty accurately, our friend came upon 51 A, just as Peter, having seen the four o'clock stable-ceremonies performed, was retiring for the evening.

"Hillo!" exclaimed Bunting, as the key turned in the lock, and the retrograding groom nearly trod on his toes—"Hillo!" repeated he, "is that you?"

"It's me," replied Peter, turning the lantern upon Bunting, to be sure of his man. "Oh, Mr. Banting, I see," continued he, for people generally mangle a name if they can.

"The same," replied Mr. Bunting, pocketing the injury. "It has just occurred to me," continued he, "that the Captain and I could make an arrangement that would be mutually beneficial."

"Well, Sir," said Peter, wondering what it was.

"You see I have a couple of very neat horses, but not quite the perfect hunters I should like to take into the country I'm going to, where there are bullfinches that require big horses to take in their stride, and also a good deal of water-jumping, so that altogether I want to be rather extra well done by, and it occurred to me that it might suit Captain Chichester if we were just to change horses for the time, and let the servants remain as they are—you taking my horses, and my groom taking yours, by which means you could remain quietly with your family in London."

Now mark the amiable benevolence that attends these London

horse-dealing transactions! A groom in the country would have looked as black as thunder, and growled, "No, I'm blowed if I do anything of the sort—I'll not part company with my 'osses not for no man!" but Peter Crankey came quite pleasantly into the thing, and only seemed anxious about the merits of the animals he was to have in exchange. He was quite "'greeable, only he wouldn't like to look arter no rubbisin' cat-legged beggars that would do him no credit, but if the 'osses were as Mr. Bunting described, and the reverence Mr. Bunting had given was good, he didn't see why the 'rangement shouldn't be made."

Well done! thought Mr. Bunting, chuckling at his own acuteness, and thinking what a swell he would be on Owen Ashford.

It was then arranged that Peter Crankey should visit Mr. Bunting's stable in Haycock Mews, May Fair, on the morrow, and if matters were approved of, that the exchange should take place the day after. And Mr. Bunting went away extremely well pleased with his bargain, and chuckling at the idea at having disappointed Mr. Percival Dobbin.

CHAPTER LX.

JOHN CROP.

A REAL London groom is a gentleman of great pretension and powers of indolence. He can make less work serve him than almost any other description of servant. They are like the men of a hunting establishment without the exercise—they can dress and they can ride, —at least sit a horse in a walk; but as to dressing the horse or caring about him after they get off him, that is no part of their business—there are other people paid for doing that. So, as the huntsman comes shambling into the yard for his horse in the morning and returns him to the place from whence he came in the evening, do these natty elbow-squaring, neat neckcloth-tying grooms expect to be presented with their animals. The groom who does least is considered to be the greatest man. Between men of this description and the humble-minded individual who advertises his general willingness, there is indeed a great gulph. One is the show, the other the working partner in the great firm of Horse, Hound, and Man. Sometimes indeed the willing man includes matters not exactly within the scope of his jurisdiction, as, for instance, "groom and gardener, can wait well at table;" or, more humble still, "gardener and groom, who can milk and butcher if required." Considering the number of works we have on the choice and management of horses, we wonder no master has ever favoured the public with a treatise on the choice and manage-

ment of grooms, a subject of quite as much importance, seeing that the horse is of very little value without an efficient attendant. There are few but whose experience would supply a few wrinkles.

Mr. Bunting's groom, John Crop, was a perfect model of the do-nothing order. Accustomed to the light, trim, drawing-room-like stables of the metropolis and great watering places, he had an idea that there were helpers and men to do all the dirty work for the smart grooms in the country. He could cock his hat and button his coat and arrange his belt, and make his boots and breeches approximate becomingly; but as to anything useful, that was quite out of the question. He cleaned his own clothes and kept himself trim and smart to ride after his master, and what more could a good-looking, fresh-complexioned young fellow, be expected to do.

When Peter Crankey's emissary (for he did not go himself) arrived at Benson's livery and bait stables in Haycock Mews, May Fair, to inspect our hero's horses, Crop was waiting for orders at Mr. Bunting's lodgings in Charges Street; but the production of Mr. Bunting's card enabled the party to see the horses, squeeze their wind-pipes, punch their ribs, and otherwise examine them under the auspices of the helper. That done, the man turned on his heel and walked deliberately out of the Mews without note or comment, followed by the usual ejaculation of "Ah, you're a gemman, you are," from his late assistant. But if the man was remiss, the master was prompt; for when Mr. Bunting arrived at the Polyanthus Club, the porter on handing him his letters announced that a party had been there to say he could have Captain—Captain—Captain somebody's horse.

"Captain Cavendish Chichester's," interposed Mr. Bunting.

"*That's* the name, sir," replied the porter; whereupon our hero went bounding up stairs into the morning room, looking as happy as R—d—l P—lm—r when he has thrown his client's case away.

His various notes, letters, cards, &c., hurriedly conned, he got into a Hansom cab and went rolling away to Rochester Square, there to bind the bargain. What a good thing it was, he thought as he galloped along, that he had given the fellow a sovereign. How foolish that finely-named Mr. Dobbin would look when he came, expecting to show off on the gray. And our hero thought if Owen Ashford and he did not captivate Miss Rosa, nothing would. Arrived at Sligo Mews, he presently thought the money might have been better bestowed; for Peter on appearing had evidently been basking in the sunshine of the gin-palace, and had dimmed his evil eye considerably. Still, as a man who is never exactly sober is never quite drunk, his indulgence had only the effect of engendering familiarity, causing him to receive our dandified friend with extended hand instead of giving him the cap or hat rap of servitude. Somehow or other, too, Peter had shaved off or forgotten his moustache.

"Ah, Captain!" exclaimed he, grasping our hero's hand severely

as he turned, or rather bundled, him into the stable; "Ah, Captain! you've got the two besht (hiccup) oshes that ever (hiccup) man laid (hiccup) leg over (lurch), don't care where the two next (hiccup) besht are. Now when shall we shwop? When shall we shwop?" continued he, diving his hands into his dirty breeches pockets and making a rubbing-post of our friend as he spoke.

"Well, directly," replied Mr. Bunting, wishing to be done with the nasty fellow, the return smell of Juniper being stronger than he liked.

"*Di*-rectly ish the word!" hiccuped Peter, nudging Bunting with his elbow.

"That's to say, to-morrow morning," qualified Mr. Bunting, thinking Peter was in no condition to deliver.

"Morrow mornin ish the word," responded Peter; "morrow mornin ish the (hiccup) word, Equinoeshal Gale, Esheware Road."

"No, no, the Golconda Station—the Golconda Station," frowned Mr. Bunting.

"Musht stop at the Noeshal Gale," rejoined Peter, eyeing Bunting reproachfully.

"No, no, take it as you come back—take it as you come back—after you get my horses done up," replied our friend, snappishly.

"Well, Golconda Stashon ish the word—Golconda Stashon ish the word," muttered Peter, adding, "What time?"

"Eleven thirty," replied Mr. Bunting, sternly; "but the horses should be there before that to load—say eleven punctually."

"Eleven pune ish the word—eleven pune ish the word," assented Peter, drawing his dirty hands out of his greasy-topped pockets, adding, "You'll get my oshes there, and I'll get your oshes ere. No, I'll get your oshes where?"

"Well, at my stable," replied Mr. Bunting.

"No—'spose you bring 'em ere, gov'nor," rejoined Peter, after a pause, lurching as he spoke, and fixing his evil eye steadily on our friend.

"Well, I have no objection to that," assented our hero.

"You bring your oshes ere, and I'll ave mine ready to schange," said Peter, looking especially wise.

"Very good, very good," replied Mr. Bunting, thinking they would be better without the monster.

"Shaddles, bridles, rollers, rugs, everything," enumerated the man.

"Yes, and I get yours in exchange," observed Mr. Bunting.

"In courshe—in courshe," assented Peter.

"Then say at ten thirty in the morning—ten thirty in the morning punctually," rejoined our hero.

"Ten thirty pune ish the word," added Peter, keeping his eye steadily on Mr. Bunting's hand, to see if it revisited his waistcoat pocket. But our friend had had enough of that game, and now beat a retreat without further beneficence.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE GOLCONDA STATION OF THE GREAT GAMMON AND SPINACH RAILWAY.

Crop received the intelligence of his master's change of horses with the same indifference as he would hear that Bartley had sent a pair of new boots home and wanted the old ones to mend. What he rode was nothing to him, so long as his master was pleased, provided, of course, his mount did not disfigure him. He felt more the severance from pretty Betsy Jane, the barmaid of the Coach and Horses hard by, but by sudden wrench, believing not that

"Hearts could thus be torn away,"

he looked confidently forward to a renewal of their interesting intimacy. Meanwhile he presented her with an eighteen-penny workbox, with a picture of Rosebery Rocks on the lid, and a handsome coloured photograph of himself in a claret-coloured case.

Having then communicated his marching orders to the helpers in the yard, so that they might get his horses ready for him, he next began hissing and packing up his own things, in order to send them along with Mr. Bunting's. Of course he took both first and second class clothes, relays of boots, and everything becoming, little doubting that Burton St. Leger was a place of size and importance. Betsy Jane, indeed, had her misgivings on that point, and much feared he might fall into the hands of the designing. Even in his undress travelling clothes, with the rose-tinted tops obscured with caps, she thought she had never seen any one so natty and handsome. What a happy woman she would be if she could have a bar of her own under the title of Mrs. Crop. So Crop and she went to the Alhambra Circus together that evening, and after a soothing glass of rum and milk in the morning, he tore himself away from her auburn ringlets. He then repaired to the Mews, where he found his master waiting to receive him. The bill was paid, the horses were quickly turned out, everything becoming, and Crop received the last compliment of the yard in the shape of a leg up, while another helper handed him his led horse, and, after the usual bumpings and jerkings, he got settled into his saddle, and with parting adieus put his horses in motion, and presently passed off the pavement of the Mews on to the McAdam of May Fair.

They were nice looking horses as they now stepped freely along; one a bay—called the Bard, on which Mr. Bunting is depicted careering over the Downs to the Pic Nic; the other a brown, called the Kitten, of much the same cut and calibre. Horses, servant, saddles, clothing, were altogether a very creditable turn out. So thought Mr. Bunting, as Crop now aggravated them into a trot, and our friend jumped into a perambulating Hansom to follow and see that all went on right at the place of exchange. Crop's instructions were to go to 51 A, Sligo Mews, Rochester Square, there to exchange horses, and then proceed at once to the Golconda Station, where Mr. Bunting would meet him. Now, however, Mr. Bunting thought he would just follow him in view, and abandoning his cab in the Square, take a peep round the corner, to be ready in case of requirement. Crop knowing the town as well as any cabman, went jerking by all the short cuts and by-ways, was presently in the denoted region. As luck would have it, he entered Rochester Square on the east side, which led to the 51 A end of Sligo Mews. Being a tolerably quick fellow at finding addresses, he soon saw by Matthew Andrew's darting in at the door as Crop rounded the corner where the stable was, and ere he reached it, Owen Ashford came popping out in charge of the lad, followed by the Exquisite led by old one-eye. Crop coming up then dropped from the Bard, jockey fashion, who was immediately slapped into the stable, followed by the Kitten, and Crop was instantly hoisted upon Owen Ashford, and the leading-rein of the Exquisite passed into his hand. He then proceeded to jerk and jag them into motion, Peter and Andrew retreating into the stable the moment their horses had left the door. Though the exchange was effected as quickly as possible, not two minutes being consumed in the operation,

"all the white bonnets were over the border,"

again, and John Crop was honoured with a perfect ovation as he passed up the Mews.

Sally Saunders the washerwoman, threw an old shoe after him; Billy Booth, the knife-grinder, ceased his discordant noise and grinned extensively; Mrs. Codling, the greengrocer, offered Crop a bushel of apples for his bargain; Jessey Ford and Lucy Grove, the jobbing milliners and dress-makers, clapped their hands and exclaimed, "Those 'll be the swells we saw!—those 'll be the swells we saw!" While Tomkins, the badgeless cabman, hallood out, "I say, *sur!* is your gov'nor fond o' valking?"

Crop jerked his head, and tried to look unconcerned, putting it all down to their low back-woodsman-like ignorance. They knew nothing of May Fair. Meanwhile Mr. Bunting having seen the exchange effected, regained his cab and drove off to the station to order the horse-box.

The Golconda Station of the Great Gammon and Spinach Railway, as the reader—at all events the shareholders are well aware—was

built, as George Robins used to say, "regardless of expense," the architect having apparently taken his idea of the edifice from some scene in the Arabian Nights entertainment. Hence, the splendid dividend of two-pence-halfpenny a share, so complacently announced by the chairman, as shown in the picture of "The Railway Meeting" in that inimitable work, the "Manners and Customs of the English." If poor George Stephenson had ventured to shadow forth such a gigantic structure in the early days of railways, he would have been "pooh-pooh'd," and requested not to make a fool of himself; so vast is its space, and interminable its limits. No need of mirrors or artificial means to magnify or reproduce its dimensions. It is startling as it stands. Since, however, the dividends, originally pitched at two hundred and fifty per cent., have dwindled down to two-pence-halfpenny, the directors have been endeavouring to rectify their original error by curtailing the working establishment, and instead of having two men—one to help the other to do nothing, as formerly they had—they put the work of two men upon one; so that, unless a traveller

looks a little to himself, he stands a chance of being only indifferently served. If the majority of railways had been constructed with anything like ordinary prudence and economy, they would have been sources of wealth to the shareholders, and the public might have travelled for half what they now do. As it was, it was believed that their resources were boundless, and every species of folly and extravagance was indulged in. That, however, by way of parenthesis.

When Mr. Bunting arrived at the Great Golconda Station, expecting to have a horse-box supplied as quickly as he would a shilling's worth of heads at a club, he found there was a good deal of hollooing and shouting, and shifting of work from one person to another. There is nothing so unbusiness-like as a great deal of noise. At length the little caravan was got up to the tramway, the compartment let down, and the willing horses were punched into the box like bullocks. Up

then went the side, and nothing further was seen of Owen Ashford but his eye. Tickets were taken, cabs and carriages began to roll into the yard, and presently the engine came hissing down from its house. Meanwhile Mr. Bunting proceeded to give his parting directions to the groom—fearing before to trust him with two sets at a time. The only difficulty he anticipated was that of the man-boy finding his way from the Curleyford Station, where he had to stop, to Burton St. Leger; to obviate which Mr. Bunting had taken a tracing off the county map on to a piece of foreign letter paper, which he now presented to Crop, pointing out to him what to hit, miss, or avoid, in a very blind leading-the-blind sort of way. "You'll have no difficulty," said he, "you'll have no difficulty," repeated he, folding the paper, after mystifying himself and giving it to Crop, who forthwith transferred it to his hat along with his kerchief and a slice of bread and cheese.

Just then Mr. Dick Dawdler, who has the same sort of mania for seeing trains start that some gentlemen of old used to have for seeing the mails leave the White Horse Cellar or the Peacock at Islington, strolled up and claimed our hero's acquaintance, almost making him forget, in the midst of Dawdler's sage observations about the weather —what it had been, what it was going to be, what it was last year,— to tell Crop to order him apartments at the Cornwallis Hotel, and have a fly to meet him by the Express train that evening.

The bell then rang. "Take your seats! Please take your seats!" resounded along the platform; late comers rushed frantically in, hollowing out "Stop!" as though they were left behind. A *battue* of doors sounded from end to end, a shrill whistle followed, and away went the long train, hissing and snorting like an exasperated crocodile. The last joint of its tail having disappeared at the turn, porters again stood at ease, strangers retired, and the Golconda Station sunk into a state of temporary repose.

CHAPTER LXII.

BURTON ST. LEGER.

Burton St. Leger was a large place, or rather a small one stretched out into a large one, just as a goldbeater hammers a small piece of the previous metal into a large circumference, or a little moth of a woman distends herself into a hay-stack with crinoline. It was a longitudinal square, bisected with gravelly cross-roads, round whose spacious green area some spirited individual had planted unhappy-looking limes, in hopes of seeing them emulate the large oaks and elms with which the town, or rather village, outskirts was surrounded. These were now made more visible in leafless winter by the spars and thorns with which their stems were encased to protect them from the cattle and idle boys. The town being purely agricultural, the houses and cottages stood at respectful distances from each other; each seeming to be what the villa agents call "self-contained," instead of huddled together, dependent on one another for support. There cannot perhaps be a greater contrast to the now thatched, now blue-roofed, now stone-slated miscellany of houses and cottages constituting a real straggling country village than the long monotonous repetitions of dwellings containing a window, a numbered door, and a peep-hole, peculiar to a mining one. The former always look healthy and nice, while the latter too often present a combination of mud, tawdry squalor, and unbecoming finery. Burton St. Leger was a real country place, where the women wore bedgowns and went to the well themselves, instead of sending those wretched children-servants the mining population so delight to employ.

After the pear-tree covered parsonage, and the red brick fox-hunting farmer, Mr. Buckwheat's residence, the Lord Cornwallis Inn was decidedly the most imposing-looking house in the place, being bow-windowed and blue-roofed, with white rails set in the stone coping of a low wall in front. Here on a summer's evening the rural parliament would assemble and talk over matters quite as important to them as those that are discussed at St. Stephen's—how Mrs. Manby managed her husband; how Luke Brown had been out poaching again; how Giles Summerbell had got forty shillings for his barley, while Tom Crosier had "nabbut getten" thirty-eight, and other equally important rural and agricultural matters. In the old ploughing days of posting, the Lord Cornwallis Inn was a sleeping house, and many great people have reposed in its old tapestried state apartment; but when

roads began to mend, people found they could run through from Highgreen to Mayfield, and the Marquisate business began to decline. First his lordship's cocked hat and wig on the sign went, then his coat, and lastly the effigy, like the marquisate itself, disappeared altogether. The name of the house, at the time of our tale, was only represented by a once sparkling blue board, having on it the following inscription in somewhat lack-lustre letters:—

MATTHEW MULDOON,

LICENSED VICTUALLER, JOB AND POST MASTER.

NEAT WINES, NEAT POSTCHAISES, &c.

But though the name of the master appeared on the sign, the business of the house was in fact entirely conducted by his wife, Mrs. Muldoon, Matty having long retired from business and devoted himself entirely to drinking—being always to be found at the receipt of custom in the bar, with his clay-pipe, ready to give or take glasses with any one. The taste for giving "glasses" among the lower orders seems to correspond with that of giving dinners among the higher ones, many people being willing to give glasses and dinners who would be very sorry to give the other party the money the glasses or dinners would cost. The dinners we can understand, because there is the gratification of display; but what pleasure there can be in seeing human beings reduce themselves to a level with the animal creation, by gulping down glass after glass of liquid fire, does seem to us to be rather incomprehensible. Nevertheless, Matty was always at it: never incapacitated by the quantity he had taken, but as ready to accept the hospitality of the last man as he had been of the first. Thus he had gone on year after year for many years, and though his corporation had increased and his legs spindled, while his face had assumed a more mulberry-like hue, yet people said the drink did him "no harm," he was "so used to it;" and as the doctrine was a convenient one, Matty thought not either. So he sotted and drank for the good of the house and the bad of himself—a practice not so common now as it was a few years since.

Taking the general range of country inns, however, we may say that the same division into which the old butler threw his master's malt liquor, and we threw the lawyer's, may describe the whole range of them, namely, ale, table, and lamentable. The George at Melton, the Station at York, the Bedford at Brighton, and a few others that do not immediately occur to us, are ale, but by far the greater number are only "table," and very, very many "lamentable." In fact there is no branch of our rural economy that requires more revision and amendment than the country inns; in fact there is no economy about them at all. The large comfortable old posting-houses that existed prior to railways have all disappeared or been converted into schools or

convents, or such like purposes. At one of these a man with his horses could live very comfortably during the hunting season. The landlords were generally sportsmen themselves, and also large farmers, so that there was a stroll over the farm at all events, if not a little shooting to occupy a non-hunting day, while the constant expectation of travellers, the *tinkle, tinkle, tinkle* of the ostler's bell, with the commotion consequent on the long traces, the handing up of the smoking glass to the green-veiled maid in the rumble, with the grand aërial sweep of the landlord's hat as the quickly-changed ploughmen post-boys climbed on to their horses and whipped away with their cargoes, with the commentaries of the now left-behind ones on the travellers' liberality, all helped to beguile the tedium of the time. Those houses have all disappeared, or if any remain, are dragging out miserable existences, with weak worn-out establishments, women waiters, and either antediluvian ostlers or ignorant hobbledehoys, fresh at each quarter, who hardly know how to put on a bridle, and who, after staring at a stranger on horseback, ask him if he wants him "put oop." Then to see them whip off the saddle, let the horse be ever so hot, and dash in the corn as quick as they can get it—giving him what they call "a lick and a promise," instead of cleaning him—all irritate the man who knows how a horse should be attended to. And here we may observe that ostlers are generally either very quick clever men, or very slow useless ones; we seldom meet a medium man in the situation of ostler, though we meet with a great many brandy-nosed bad ones. Some of the good ones are marvellously active in their habits. In the old coaching days we knew a man who looked after twenty-five coach-horses and harness, with the aid of only one helper, and did the general stable business of the house into the bargain. But then he was a man who was always at work, never lounging at street corners or popping into the inn-bar to see what o'clock it was. Third-rate country inns in England are deplorable places. Keen must be the British sportsman, or desperately in love the man who can stay long at one of these gristly, tough mutton houses for the purpose of hunting or courting, or even for a combination of both. There is no resemblance to civilisation in anything about them, save the bill, that is generally a famous one. Six shillings a bottle, or rather three-quarters of a bottle, of the earthiest sherry; eight shillings a bushel for oats; and servants keep, out of all comprehension. A master should always put his servant on extra board-wages before going to an inn, or he will pay double for what the man would himself get for one-half. Considering that the rule is for the groom to have a bed for nothing where there are horses, very little extra should do it, seeing that an innkeeper can victual a party of servants at two shillings a day each, or three shillings a day where there is only one. Of course there are some innkeepers who will exclaim on reading this, "it can't be done, some one has written this who

knows nothing of the requirements of gentlemen's servants;" but we beg to say that we had the information from one of themselves, therefore it may be taken to be true. If they cannot board grooms for a guinea a week, how, let us ask, does it happen that a farm-hind will board a stout ploughman for six shillings a week, and make money by it too? It is no advantage to a master to have his servant eating veal-cutlets or lamb's fry for breakfast; he wants him fed like his horses for useful work, and the man would not order such dainties if he was paying for himself; he would have his money's worth of good wholesome food, and if the innkeeper would not supply him at reasonable prices, he would soon find plenty of people about who would. The groom would thus pocket something a week for himself, and the master would also save by the arrangement, for if he gives the groom his head he will soon eat him a couple of pounds a week at innkeepers' prices. Horses, too, are terribly overcharged at inns, which prevents sportsmen going to them if they can by any possibility avoid it. We have before us two bills, one for three horses for a week at a country inn, amounting to *4l.* 12*s.* 3*d.*, exclusive of the expectations of the ostler; the other for the cost of two horses standing ten weeks in a private stable, amounting to *5l.* 14*s.* 8*d.* A gentleman of our acquaintance, being presented with his stable-bill on the morning of his departure from an inn, intending to hunt his way home, was surprised to find that his horses had eaten four bushels of oats a week each, exclusive of hay, bran, beans, and other *et ceteras*, making the bill up to about double what he expected, 13*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.*, whereupon he had a long conference with the Boniface, who at length generously agreed to take off the odd eighteenpence; whereupon our sportsman proceeded to the meet, and had the satisfaction of hearing that the hounds had found their fox immediately and gone right away, nobody knew where. So he saved his eighteenpence and lost his hunt.

Still sportsmen like touring, and would tour very considerably if they could only get moderately housed at anything like reasonable rates; but the present system is almost a bar to locomotion. It is not that sportsmen object to paying inn bills where the accommodation is good, but that they object to pay the price of good accommodation for very bad. Nevertheless we must bring our friend Mr. Bunting down from the elegancies of the Polyanthus Club to take his chance at the Marquis of Cornwallis Hotel and Posting-house at Burton St. Leger. But first we must get his stud there.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE LORD CORNWALLIS INN.

It was a dull winter's day, with a cold rain beating right into the pit of his stomach, that a coat-collar-turned-up groom was seen working a couple of tuck-tailed horses round Barnfather's Corner, asking his way to Burton St. Leger. This was our friend Mr. Crop, who, after a variety of perils by rail and by road, had at length advanced thus far into the bowels of the land, wondering when his journey would end, when his question, "How far is it to Burton St. Leger?" caused Morrison, the foot Post-messenger, to whom it was addressed, to pause and stare with astonishment at the idea of anybody not knowing Burton St. Leger.

"How far!" exclaimed he, eyeing Crop with incredulous suspicion —"how far! Why *this* be it, to be sure!"

"Oh, this is it, is it?" replied our Cockney friend, half-glad at the termination of his journey—half-shocked at the desolate appearance of the place, no flags, no gas, no cabs, no 'bus, no nothing; only a large green with a flock of geese on a pond in the centre.

"Then please where be the Markis Cornwallis Inn?" asked Crop, eyeing the scattered assortment of houses and cottages in the vista.

"The Cornwallis Inn be the great white house on the right there," replied Morrison, pointing towards it; "there," continued he, "where the man has just come out from under the entry."

"Thank ye," replied Crop, getting his horses in motion again and trotting up to the indicated quarter.

There stood a man in an old badger-skin cap, with a cadaverous countenance and desperately sore eyes, whose dirty fustian clothes might be improved, but could not possibly be spoiled, by the rain, of which indeed he seemed quite regardless, as with his hands in his tattered trowser-pockets he gazed, first up the street and then down, in the usual style of utter vacuity. Seeing horses approaching, he thought the rider might stop for a glass, in which case he would perhaps get something for holding them; so as their rounding heads showed which way they were coming, he stepped a little aside, to give them the shelter of the entry. But Crop passed under the arch into the narrow stable-yard beyond, the clatter of the horses' feet on the pavement, disturbing Mr. Muldoon over his glass, and bringing the man of the fustians up the yard to see what was wanted. This was

the ostler, Sore-eyed Sam as he was familiarly called, a wonderful fellow for shuffling off work and making excuses, a sort of performance that a man who is good at is seldom good at anything else.

"Where's the bell! where's the ostler's bell!" exclaimed Crop, looking wistfully round at the wretched, unspouted, red-tiled buildings, so unlike what he had left in the morning.

"I be the ostler, I be the ostler," replied Sam, shuffling up to Crop's knee, adding, "What may you please to want?"

"Horses put up to be sure," replied Crop, wondering at anybody asking such a question.

"Put up," repeated Sam, scratching his uncombed head; "put up —whoy be ye goin to stop here?"

"Why, yes—till my master comes at all events," replied Crop, muttering "I don't think we'll stop long after that."

The wretched creature then rubbed his red eyelids, thinking how he could best shuffle through the matter. He was not prepared for anything of the sort—he had a cow and a donkey in the two-stall stable, a Crosskill roller, a sow and pigs, and half a ton of hay in the three-stall one, and the old mare occupied as much of the long stable as was water-tight.

"If you'd ha' com'd yesterday," said Sam, staring, "I could ha' done for you nicely."

"Well, but I've come to-day, so stir yourself and get things ready, for my master will be here in no time," replied Crop, alighting from the now dejected-looking Owen Ashford, and jumping and shaking the wet out of his clothes as he spoke.

"I'm sure I don't know what to do," continued Sam, looking quite bewildered.

"Well, you get the osses under cover, and don't stand staring there like a stuck pig," rejoined Crop, thinking what a contrast the wretch was to Mr. le Measurer, the orthodox head of the Haycock Mews, May Fair. "What have you here?" continued Crop, advancing and opening the door of the two-stall stable—"a cow and a donkey!" exclaimed he, adding, "turn them out and put my osses in ere."

"Well, but where can I put the cow and the ass?" asked Sam.

"Put them where you please," replied Crop, entering and turning them out himself. He then led Owen Ashford in, and the Exquisite followed of his own accord. It was a sad, dirty, cob-webby place, but anything was better than the door on such a day as this. So Crop got them into their stalls, and fastened them up by the heads. "Now where's the man of the house—the Markis of Cornwallis—to be found?" inquired he, returning to the door and dashing the wet from his hat on to the ground.

"The man o' the house is a woman," replied Sam, grinning at his own wit.

"What, a Marchioness is it?" rejoined Crop, equally sharp.

"You can call her what you like," replied Sam, "I calls her the Missus."

"Well, let's have a sight of her," said Crop, "I've got a good many orders to give."

"There she's!" said Sam, nodding to where a little roundabout woman was making darkness visible by stirring the fire of a bay-windowed little back room, answering the double purpose of parlour and bar. There were the "Old Tom" and the "Old Rum" and the "Old Gin" casks ranged on a shelf against the wall, and there was the old cask of a husband sitting in a semicircular chair, with his pipe, by the now-refreshened fire.

The Marquis had about got to the time of day when he became

"O'er all the ills of life victorious,"

for he had imbibed his own bottle of brandy and several cleemosynary glasses from parties who had looked in "quite promiscuous," as they say, to have glasses themselves. He was now on the free list with Jack Calcot the cobbler, who had ordered two shilling glasses of "hot with;" and just as Crop opened the sash-door, the Marquis was endeavouring to impress upon Calcot the "great 'spect and 'steem" he had for him, and how Calcot was welcome to the loan of his donkey any day or any hour—the Marquis nearly melting himself into tears, and blinking severely at the beaker of brandy as he spoke.

Crop's appearance at the door rather interrupted the protestations of friendship, and drew all eyes to where he stood.

"Rooms for a gentleman and his valet," now announced Crop from the door, in the usual style of London laconics.

"Heigh day!" exclaimed the Marchioness of Cornwallis, starting and bustling up, as if touched with a reminiscence of former times. "What was it you said?" exclaimed she, hurrying up to where Crop stood with the door in his hand, surveying the cheerful scene—good fire, round table, and glasses all round.

"Rooms for a gentleman and his valet," repeated Crop, adding, "and a fly to meet him by the Express."

"Fly!" ejaculated the Marchioness—"Fly! there's not such a thing in the place."

"Well, a covered conveyance of some sort," rejoined Crop, supposing he must do the best he could under the circumstances.

"Covered conveyance of some sort," repeated the Marchioness, sticking her hands in her fat sides and thinking matters over. She then pulled the string of the ostler's bell outside, which presently brought dirty-shirted Sam to the presence, to whom she communicated the stranger's behests. Sam, like a good many people, would rather be doing any work than his own, and after giving his red eyelids and snub nose an upward rub with his sleeve, he suggested that they might borrow Dr. Catcheyside's little carriage, which he could drive,

and then they might get old Tommy Lee to come into the yard to look arter the osses.

This suggestion being approved of, Sam was despatched on the double mission, while the Marchioness summoned her pretty maid-of-all-work, Rebecca Mary, to consult her about carrying out the domestic arrangements. Rebecca Mary was the belle of Burton St. Leger, a pretty smiling, blue-eyed, fair-haired maid, who, notwithstanding a host of other suitors, had to undergo the persecution of Sore-eyed Sam. No sooner did Crop see her smart little clean-aproned figure than, with the susceptibility of his master, he almost became reconciled to the discomforts of the place—this, too, in spite of auburn-ringlets and the other attractions of the Coach and Horses. So he withdrew with the ladies into the kitchen, leaving Old Muldoon to renew his protestations

of "'spect and 'steem" for Mr. Calcot, and offer the loan of his donkey "any day or any hour" as before.

The adjourned debate was then resumed before the kitchen fire, away from the observations and running commentary of the drunkards. Most women have some peculiar ideas of their own about comfort; some think half-roasting people alive is comfort, some that a fine tea-pot is comfort, others that a fine row of chimney-ornaments—shells, spars, and fossils—is comfort, while Mrs. Muldoon went altogether upon fine linen. If there were only fine sheets and pillow-cases to the bed, and a handsome toilette-cover to the dressing-table, she thought it made no matter what other things were like. The fowl might be stringy, the ham hard, pale, and indigestible, the eggs limey, and the toast tough; but if the linen was snowy all the rest would do.

So, having learnt all she could from Mr. Crop about his master's greatness and intentions, she produced the key of the beloved linen-chest to make the necessary selection, while Rebecca Mary lighted the fires, and Crop returned to his neglected horses in the sorry stable, there to see old Tommy Lee fumbling and dribbling at the dressing.

CHAPTER LXIV.

MR. BUNTING ARRIVES AT BURTON ST. LEGER.

T was a great boon to the sporting world when railways enabled them to follow their callings in distant countries,—the shooter to fly down to the Highlands, the fox-hunter to move about with his horses, taking a hunt wherever he liked, instead of the old weary five-and-twenty or thirty miles a-day trail by the road, with the rest required at the end of the journey. Then when the groom's tardy letter arrived, saying the horses were safe, and the hounds at so-and-so, there was the clear day necessary for giving him his orders, with the uncertainty of getting a seat by the coach, and the withdrawal from all the occupations of life for the one pursuit, that a change of the weather might prevent. As the long looked for day approached, how anxiously the weather was studied, and references made to former seasons. What was so mortifying to a packed-up Londoner rushing out of town at night, as seeing the ominous champagne-glass-like rind on the shop windows, as he hurried along to the coach office, Hatchett's or the White Horse Cellar, say, and finding as he got off the stones the first freezing breath of a frost spread over the road that gradually ripened into blackness as they proceeded, stopping the up-shot of the wheels as the coach rolled noisily over the hard surface, the guard aggravating his discomfiture by apparently superfluous *twang, twang, twangs* of the horn. Or, again, our friend having got to his journey's end, with a few hours left for a thaw between the sheets prior to dressing for hunting, to be aroused to the fact that the country was half-a-foot under snow! No help for it but to stay on in hopes of a

change, or undergo the toil and trouble of a return journey. Now, if a sportsman is stopped by the weather he just shoots back again, with as much ease as the sporting cockney of old used to make the return journey from Croydon. But we are receding in our progress, and must be getting our hero down into the country.

If Mr. Bunting had been bent solely on hunting he would have felt as many a man has felt who goes from home for that purpose, that the trouble was greater than the pleasure—that in fact there is nothing like hunting from home. The little station he stopped at, the little carriage he got into, the deep jolting cross roads he had to encounter, above all, the gloomy aspect of Burton St. Leger, and the dismal desertion of the Lord Cornwallis Inn, would have brought his sporting ardour down quickly to zero, and made him wish himself back at the Polyanthus Club. As it was, however, the near approach to the land of the fair lady, invested each scene with a charm, just as gallant Don Quixote turned all his troubles and disasters into glory.

The Cornwallis Inn was really very nice, the rooms were really very good, the tablecloth was very clean, the castors, those excellent criterions of comfort, were well supplied, and if the old landlord did smoke bad tobacco, that might be easily remedied by getting him some good. Fortunately, too, Rebecca Mary had somewhat reconciled Crop to his quarters, so there was no one to grumble but Bonville the valet, who received the usual attention that a man does who speaks broken English.

A sportsman of the old school on arriving at his quarters would have repaired to the stable to see how his horses were lodged, but that sort-of-thing has exploded, and the poor creatures are now left a good deal to chance and the care of the groom.

Now that is all very well where a groom is a groom, but as not one in ten calling himself so, really is one, the personal inspection cannot be safely dispensed with. However, Mr. Bunting did dispense with it, and busied himself with his own delectable self, and in speculating on his charmer, and the probable success of his trip. He wondered where he would meet with her first—he wondered how she would receive him—he wondered how Mamma would receive him—he wondered how they would look. He wondered if the fat boy was still in attendance—he wondered whether the fat boy's father was rich—he wondered whether Privett Grove was the McDermott's own — he wondered how they got it—he wondered whether it was a pretty place. He thought he would ride Owen Ashford over the next day and see. And so amidst a world of musing pleasant meditations, he sat at a very white-ash-burning fire, and sipped the best part of a pint of earthy sherry, ere he retired to the heavy tapestried low four-post bed, and the enjoyment of the fine linen. Thus, amidst pleasant dreams and anticipations of the morrow, our too susceptible hero passed a very tranquil night. Even in the morning when he arose, and a too

truthful sun revealed the real poverty and dilapidation of the place, the grass growing on the road, almost up to the inn door, the ghosts of trees haunting the spacious green, he took courage, and thought of the summer glories of Roseberry Rocks, the mysteries of muslin and gossamer dresses. Then, when after breakfast Mrs. Muldoon, arrayed in a dyed-brown silk dress, came, smoothing her black satin machinery-laced apron, in at the door, to hope he had "slept" well, and to inquire what he would like to have for dinner; he availed himself of the opportunity, of having a word with her on the locality of Burton St. Leger generally. And a better person he could not have applied to, for in addition to good local knowledge, she had great powers of gossip, and knew the history of every house in the neighbourhood, as well as any register-office keeper. How there was company at the Castle, how there was a great Prince with an immense retinue of servants staying there, how they had had a great gunning match, where they had killed three hundred brace of pheasants, and two hundred hares, and how there were to be other great doings. Then descending to more ordinary mortals, she informed him that the large stone house he saw on the opposite hill was Freeland's Lawn, Squire Springfield's, that two of the young ladies there were going to be married; then from Freeland's Lawn she got to Somerville Tower on the other side of the river where she said there were three beautiful girls with very large fortunes; thence, by a skilful manœuvre, Mr. Bunting brought her round to Mayfield, and managed to draw up to Miss Rosa through the medium of Goldspink's bank.

"Did she know Goldspink's bank?" he asked as though he had some of its notes, or a letter of credit upon it.

"Know Goldspink's bank!" repeated Mr. Muldoon in a tone of astonishment at the idea of any one asking such a question, "Know Goldspink's bank! I should think everybody knew Goldspink's bank with its fi-pun notes."

"What, it's a good bank is it?" asked Mr. Bunting, with apparent unconcern.

"Good enough, I dare say," replied the hostess, "Good enough," as if she had no great opinion of it either. Sivin and four had charged ten and a-half per cent. for discounting one of old Matty's bills, during the hard times, hence her displeasure.

"Rich?" asked Mr. Bunting in a tone of indifference.

"Oh rich aye, rich enough my w—o—r—d, they know how to make money there; but if I mistake not, the young 'un will spend some of it for them one of these days."

"What, there 's a son is there?" asked Mr. Bunting, as if he had never heard of him before. "Is he a partner?" added he.

"No, partner, no!" sneered Mrs. Muldoon, "they hadn't need take such bodies as him into banks. He 's just a young wild ne'er-do-well sort of a body."

"What does he do?" asked our hero, warming with his subject.

"Do!" sneered Mrs. Muldoon, "Do! he's always doing some foolish act or another; they say he's lost a vast of money by gambling, and now he's taken up with a low fellow to go upon the turf. My w—o—r—rd, but they'll clear him out there. He'd better let that alone."

"Who has he taken up with?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"Oh, you'll know nothing about him, you'll know nothing about him," replied Mrs. Muldoon. "He was a dirty ragged boy only the other day, and now he's dressed out in finger rings, and an Albert chain, and calls for hock and sober water."

"What fun!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, seeing who the gentleman was she was imitating.

"Fun! I see no fun in it," replied Mrs. Muldoon. "I like to see people 'sociate with their equals, and not with such rubbish as this boy does."

"Why don't they get him married?" asked Mr. Bunting, well knowing that the ladies consider matrimony a cure for everything.

"Well, they did talk about that too," replied Mrs. Muldoon, smoothing her apron, and gathering her recollections, "they did talk about that too, and to a very pretty girl; but somehow I think he's not a-going to make anything of it."

"Why not?" inquired our now anxious friend.

"Why not!" replied Mrs. Muldoon, "Why not! Well, in the first place, he's been such a long time about it; in the second place they have been brought up too much together like; and in the third—though this is strictly confidential, having had it from her maid—Miss has been away from home this summer, and picked up another beau—a fine gentleman, with large ——"

Just as the conversation got to this interesting point, Crop, after a tap at the thin back door, popped his sleek head into the room to ask if his master had any orders for him, whereupon Mrs. Muldoon withdrew, leaving them to arrange matters together; and Crop's report of the horses being somewhat favourable—at all events not prohibitory—our friend determined to sally out in quest of adventure as soon as they could be got ready. Who knows, thought he, but kind fortune might lead him in Miss Rosa's way, at all events he would reconnoitre the country, and be better prepared for the coming campaign.

So with the aid of Bonville, he accomplished a radiant costume, and with palpitating heart took his place before the fire, there to await the trampling of the horses to call him away. As ill luck however would have it, the too brilliant morning sun had suddenly become obscured with dull leadeny clouds, and just as Mr. Bunting was consulting his diminutive watch to see what time it was, a sudden bash of sleet dashed across the window, as if some idle boy had thrown a handful of peas against it. And when our friend went into

the bay to see what it really was, such a driving storm rebounded from the ground, as gave little hopes of amendment. Here then was a pretty predicament for a club gentleman from town, with nothing to amuse him but the inscriptions on the panes—the "Martha Bakers'" and "Betsey Jones'" of former service, or the fervid effusion of poetical bagman. No books, no papers, no billiards, nothing but the old paste and scissors *Mayfield Mercury* parading its list of agents, and "enormous circulation," with price currents, and an elegant assortment of quack doctors' advertisements.

However, there was no mistake about the day—it was final and conclusive. Not the most sanguine young lady, bent on her first ball, could see any hopes in that heavy horizon. The atmosphere looked as if it might be wrung out like a wet sheet. So, with a sigh, Mr. Bunting cast his hat peevishly on the horse-hair sofa, inwardly wishing that Crop had kept out of the room. And it is a remarkable fact, that though he presently sought another interview with his landlady, and tried her in a variety of ways, he could not get her to resume the interrupted conversation. Whether her womanly wit had suggested that this stranger might be the young banker's rival, or Mrs. Muldoon was indebted to Bonville or to Crop for the information, or whether Miss Perker's confidential communication had returned more vividly to her recollection on getting down-stairs is immaterial, she would go to any place rather than Mayfield, and talk of any person rather than either young or old Goldspink. So our friend had to discuss the mutton chop beef steak, beef steak mutton chop question, without the piquant sauce that subject would have given the object of his choice. One thing however consoled him, namely, that Miss Perker had spoken well of him, which showed that the pink satin scarf had not been misapplied. So having got all the information he could out of Mrs. Muldoon, he at length let her withdraw to carry out his orders and respond to the repeated tap, tap, taps, of her drunken husband on the round table. Meanwhile the wind blew, the rain beat, and the whole aspect of the firmament denoted a hopelessly wet afternoon. So our friend was thrown on his own resources, aided by *Patteson's Itinerary*, and a very old copy of *Cary's Cross Roads*. But stay! we did the old *Mayfield Mercury* injustice with regard to its contents, for, in addition to the leading articles before-mentioned, it gave the meets of the hounds, from which Mr. Bunting gleaned that the Duke of Tergiversation was not the lord paramount of the country, for while his Grace's pack only figured as a two days a-week one, the hounds of another gentleman, namely, those of Mr. Jovey Jessop hunted four; and though Jovey's meets were generally wide of Burton St. Leger, yet when the Duke was at home and wanted his guests well galloped, Jovey hunted the east side of his county, in return for Baxterley Woods and other covers that the Duke gave him,—that is to say, let him draw,—for the Duke, early in life, had promised

his mother never to give anything away, and most rigidly adhered to his word. And now, as, we are sorry to say, the tempestuous weather that greeted our hero continued unremittingly during the whole of the first, and also of the following day, we will here take advantage of the opportunity of introducing Mr. Jessop with a certain peculiar appendage of his to our readers.

CHAPTER LXV.

MR. JOVEY JESSOP AND HIS JUG.

Mr. Jovey Jessop, as his name would almost indicate, was a good fellow—a thorough sportsman, and a hearty hospitable man. His fault perhaps was in being rather "too good" a fellow, a failing, however, that tells against a man himself and not against his friends, and one that the world is always happy to overlook. The supply of good fellows is by no means in excess of the demand. A man has only to hoist the flag of hospitality to insure a very considerable amount of custom. So it was with Mr. Jessop. Coming into a large fortune on reaching years of indiscretion, and having undergone the depredations of the O'Dicey tribe, he presently ascertained that hunting was his forte, and took to it accordingly. He began with that best of instructors, a pack of harriers, and having mastered the rudiments of scent, as much as that puzzling phenomenon can be mastered (for, after all is said and done, all the learning in the world will not make a scent), he gave his harriers away and took to foxhounds.

Getting a country is now a very easy matter, the next great social science to scent being that of getting one's sport out of other people's pockets. So Mr. Jessop had many countries offered him, all either richly endowed with subscriptions or presenting great local advantages. His first was the well known Rough and Ready-shire, where the subscriptions collapsed nearly one-half in collection, added to which, the few subscribers who did pay considered themselves entitled to have the hounds to adorn their lawns the morning after they had had two soups, two fishes, &c., on the table. Mr. Jessop not caring to be a servant, soon gave it up, and finding that a nominal subscription was in reality worse than none, resolved to hunt the next country he took at his own expense, an arrangement that gave great satisfaction to the squires of his present one, more especially as Mr. Jessop was a good-looking young bachelor who might make a permanent settlement in the country. He took Appleton Hall, a large, rambling old place, the owner of which had raced himself to the door, leaving the house and all about it in a sad state of dilapidation. If,

however, the beds were hard and the furniture scant and shabby, there was no fear of a powdered and pink silk stockinged footman meeting a returning sportsman at the foot of the stairs with a boot-jack and slippers to prevent his harming it, and as a good fox makes any country good, so a good cook makes any house comfortable. And a capital cook Mr. Jessop kept—two, indeed; an Englishman to cook his beefsteak for breakfast, and a Frenchman to send up the fricandeau, &c., for dinner. Here Mr. Jessop exercised a great amount of hospitality—more, indeed, than was good for him, but which is difficult to stop when a man once begins—guests succeed guests, the man of last year likes to come this, and so, what with one and another, a host has a hard time of it. Bachelor houses may be very independent, but there is always this objection about them, that there is no break in the evening, and men sit longer after dinner than they otherwise would. In addition to this, Mr. Jessop had some capital port, fine rich, ruby, silky wine, that connoisseurs would give any money for, and wine-merchants, if they had any, would not know how many expletives to put before it in their lists. What was more, he had a good stock of it, and Ambrose, the butler, always knew that the convulsive shake of the wire in his pantry (for the dining-room bell wouldn't always ring) meant "wine," and in he came with a bottle accordingly.

The consequence of all this was that Mr. Jessop was somewhat in the position of the man at the fight, where the rule was, "one down, t'other come on," for as fast as he spoiled the digestion of one man, a fresh one appeared to supply his place. So our host was kept at it from week's end to week's end, and though it is said that notwithstanding all the deleterious compounds they put into their insides, nobody ever saw a bilious post-boy, yet the rule did not seem to hold good with foxhunters—for Mr. Jessop, though not yet in the prime of life, not only began to be rather pink about the nose, but to have some disagreeable internal sensations, which not yielding to the treatment of the country apothecary, he just put himself into the express train one non-hunting day, saying that he was going up to Mason's to look at a horse, and, arrived in town, he went sneaking along all the by-streets to the great Dr. David Whitlow's gloomy, dirty-windowed old house, so conspicuous an object in C—— Square, hoping none of his acquaintance would see him and imagine there was anything the matter with him. In fact he didn't look as though there could be anything the matter with him, for he was a tall, stout, fresh-complexioned young man, scarcely turned of thirty, with bright hazel eyes, and clustering brown hair, who walked as though he could never tire; but, as the child told its nurse, when assuring it it was not hurt, after a fall, "Ou can't feel me, ou knows," so Mr. Jessop knew better than anybody else what his internal sensations were; and this observation will apply to many other people whom the stout healthy world calls

fanciful. Mr. Jessop having gone at the Doctor's dirty door just as he would at the Whissendine or any other brook, was speedily let in by a queer-looking little old fellow, dressed in a red-striped livery-vest, a blue drab coat with dim-centered brass buttons, and black shorts above gray worsted stockings, with absentee calves, whose Lynx-like eyes, set in an almost entirely hair-denuded head, saw at a glance who were good for a tip, and who might be done out of their turns. Seeing the hale comely person of our foxhunter, he immediately, after getting him in, began expressing his regret that there were so many visitors before him, a dissertation that Mr. Jessop cut short by showing him a half-crown, and telling him it should be his if he got him in the next turn.

"If you'll favour me with your card, I'll see what I can do," whispered the man, eyeing the money, whereupon Mr. Jessop handed him one of his best double-glazed pieces of pasteboard, and was then ushered into the dismal, seedy-carpeted dining-room, among sundry valetudinarians in various stages of languor and debility. Men with white faces, men with yellow faces, men with blue faces, men with green faces, men with every description of face, other than pleasant insurable ones. Jessop started, for it was like getting into a morgue, the contrast was so great to the mirthful healthy red-coated customers he was in the habit of seeing. The room, too, was dull and gloomy, the straggling rays of the winter's sun being about excluded by a too liberal allowance of old purple-bordered drab window-curtains. On the long green baize-covered dining-table lay a couple of penny papers, while sundry reports and subscription-lists of hospitals and charitable institutions were scattered around, which the restless patients took up and threw down again, hardly knowing what they were doing. It has been said that the time spent in a lawyer's outer office waiting for an audience, is about the most unprofitable part of a man's existence, but the great Doctor's waiting-room is a more fearful ordeal, for the lawyer merely deals in dross, while the Doctor deals out life and death, some of them, we are sorry to say, rather abruptly.

If Mr. Jessop had gone to the great house of call for sportsmen—Tattersall's yard—he would have been hailed half a dozen times before he got up to the fox, but here he thought there was no chance of meeting any one he knew. In this, however, he was mistaken. Crouched between the sideboard and the cellaret sat a man muffled up in a green shawl cravat, and a gray fur-collared boat cloak shading a sallow face, wrinkled and compressed into something like Cambridge biffin.

"Jessop, my b-o-u-y, how are you?" gasped a sepulchral voice, with a forced attempt at hilarity from over the fur collar.

Mr. Jessop stood aghast.

"What! don't you know me?" asked the speaker, peevishly, slightly lowering his green muffler from before his mouth—"Scudder,

Jack Scudder," muttered he, holding out a lean clammy hand for Jessop to shake. It was indeed a cold repulsive grasp, and like most men with unhealthy hands, he gave the shakee a good benefit of it.

"Why, what's happened?" asked Mr. Jessop, now endeavouring to reconcile the dry haggard features of the invalid with the once bright cheerful countenance of Jack Scudder, whose red-coat laps had often been distended before him flying over the leaps in a run—"What's happened?" repeated he, with a tone of concern—"what's happened, I say?"

"Oh, nothing 'ticklar, nothing 'ticklar," muttered Scudder, replacing his wraps, "only," continued he, drawing Mr. Jessop towards him, and adding confidentially in his ear, "I can't lush as I used to do—no, by Jove!—I can't lush as I used to do;" Scudder giving a melancholy shake of his head, as if his inability to drink was a national calamity.

Just then the street-door opened and closed on a departing patient, and presently the old servant opened the drawing-room one, and, with a knowing glance of the eye, summoned Mr. Jessop to the presence. Out then our master went, leaving Scudder and the rest of the patients to grumble at the preference.

"Can't lush as I used to do—can't lush as I used to do," repeated Jessop, ascending the spacious old staircase after the servant. "No, by Jove, I should wonder if you could," thought he, conning over the many carouses he had seen in Scudder's company. This brought him before the imitation rosewood door of the consultation room, where his conductor now stood, card in hand, waiting for the promised half-crown. That paid and pocketed, the man opened the door, and advanced with the "Jovey Jessop" card to his master—which having presented, he withdrew.

Dr. Whitlow or Davy Whitlow, as he is commonly called, was one of Nature's rough diamonds, who, despairing of polishing himself up into anything like civilisation, had adopted the Abernethy tack, and was as rough and free spoken as his great prototype. This style, of course, only does for the men, the ladies requiring manner and feeling, while the men rather like those who come to the point, and get through their cases quickly. So Davy used to stare at them and question them and bully them, declaring there was nothing the matter with them, or that they had nearly got to the end of their tether, with much the same unconcern either way. Having invested the guinea of the last patient (the shilling in his baggy black and white Tweed trowsers pocket, the sovereign in his table-drawer), he was taking a slip-shod turn round the scantily furnished room with his hands in the pockets of his blue flannel dressing-gown, thinking now of his dinner, now of a proposed trip to Ham, when he was presented with the card, our friend closely following, who stood transfixed at the sight of the great bearded hairy monster, into whose hands he was now delivered. He looked

more like a lion rampant than a man. Davy, seeing Jessop start, affected surprise too, and throwing himself into attitude with the card in the palm of his extended right hand, fixed his ferrety eyes (almost concealed with hair) steadily upon him, and then exclaimed, with an ominous shake of his great shaggy head, "Ah! I say Mr. Jovey, what's your name? If you don't mind what you're arter, you'll very soon be the *late* Mr. Jovey what's your name?" So saying, the monster tore the card into quarters, and threw the pieces behind him.

This was not very encouraging, but still did not preclude hope, so Jessop tried to laugh it off, and then endeavoured to draw Davy into a retail consideration of his case.

"Come this way," said the Doctor, laying his hairy paw upon Jessop's arm, and leading him up to the middle window, where a mark in the oil-cloth showed the place for examination. Davy scanned Jessop, and Jessop scanned Davy, and at last Davy spoke.

"Ah, it is as I said, Mr. Jovey what's your name—if you don't put the muzzle on, you'll very soon be the late Mr. Jovey what's your name."

"Well, but if"—ejaculated Jovey.

"You go down stairs, and ask to see Mr. Scudder," interrupted Davy, "and if you'd like to be like Scudder, you'll go on as you're doing, if not, you'll just put the muzzle on, and live till you're eighty. So now give me a guinea; none of your sovereigns, but one pound one, and go," the Doctor holding one hairy paw out for the money, and ringing a little bell with the other. So Mr. Jessop was ejected, and not caring to inquire particularly into Mr. Scudder's ailments, took his departure, much relieved by his visit, inwardly resolving not to emulate him in future. It was not that Mr. Jessop cared about wine, but he cared about company, and he presently hit upon an expedient for having the latter without the inconvenience of the former.

Among the steadiest customers of Appleton Hall—one always ready to come at long or short notice, or stay on if required—was a gentleman of the name of Boyston — Mr. Thomas Boyston, who hunted a little, but did a good deal more in the drinking way. The Boystons of Boyston, in H——shire, are a good old English family, filling a full page of "Burke," even in the compressed form in which he has now potted the Commoners, but Boyston *Père* having left ten children behind him, when the moon came to be cut up into stars there was little left for our Squire but a receivership. So he let Boyston Park, and led a sort of wandering life, now hailing in London, now hunting where he could get a free pack. Our friend Mr. Jessop's being of that description, Mr. Boyston had early taken up with them, and consumed as much Appleton port wine as any two of the hunt. He was quite the reverse of Mr. Jessop, being a dull, heavy, phlegmatic sort of man, who drank for drinking's sake, never leaving a heel tap, and always filling a bumper. His peculiarities consisted in talking in his sleep,

and always wearing nankin trowsers, both summer and winter;—expensive wear, considering his propensity for sitting cross-legged with his glass on his knee. "I didn't shay I wouldn't take any more wine," he would mutter in his sleep.—"I shaid if any other shentleman would like another bottle I"—awakening himself to consciousness by sluicing his legs with his wine. He was a short, thick, bristly, black headed fellow, who did not seem to feel any ill effects from the drink, and it occurred to Mr. Jessop that by having him to live with him all the winter he might go on with his hospitality as before, getting Boyston to bear the brunt of the battle.

So he established him a bachelor bed-room, not over sumptuously furnished, with a couple of stalls for his horses, and made him perpetual vice-president of his table. And the arrangement suited Mr. Boyston uncommonly well, for he not only got capital fare, but rose considerably in the estimation of the ladies, who requested the honour of Mr. Jessop and Mr. Boyston's company, instead of asking Mr. Jessop alone.

And the arrangements answered well in a sanatory point of view also, for in less than a month, the then lately rising rubicund hue had been transferred from Mr. Jessop's nose to that of his guest, whose great harvest-moon face now waxed broader and redder, until it looked as if it had been put into a furnace and blown red-hot. The change was not lost on the ladies, and, one day after a dinner-party at Mr. Springfield's, during the interregnum of the drawing-room, the abstemiousness of Mr. Jessop, and the rapacity of Mr. Boyston, came to be commented upon, when Mrs. Captain Cambo, who was the wit of the party, suggested that Mr. Jessop used Mr. Boyston as a jug to carry away the wine in he couldn't hold himself. And Mr. Boyston's great square figure favouring the idea, it was passed round among the gentlemen when they returned, by whom it was well *haw-haw-hawed*, and pronounced to be extremely good, and thenceforth Mr. Jessop and his Jug became familiar as household words.

Having now introduced parties with whom our hero will presently come in contact, let us return to him at his weather-bound quarters at Burton St. Leger.

CHAPTER LXVI.

A SHOCKING BAD SADDLE.

The next day was as bright and cheerful as its predecessors had been dull and gloomy. Nature would seem to have shed her tears, dried her eyes, and put her pocket-handkerchief away. The sun shone forth with redoubled splendour; the noisy geese went screeching and cackling and clapping their wings over the green to the water; the emancipated pigs roved leisurely about; the sparrows twittered on the eaves; while the fluttering pigeons were here, there, and everywhere. It was a fortunate circumstance that the weather had changed, for the Duke of Tergiversation had fixed upon this day to exhibit the prowess of his pack to his illustrious guest the Prince Pirouetteza. To this end all the odd horses had been put in requisition, and all the old yellow coats exhumed from their boxes to put upon helpers and straps, to swell the number and importance of the retinue. Great was the preparation at the Castle—Mr. Haggish alone was moody and thoughtful; for, independently of the noise and mischief of these amateur whips, the loss of his "varra best hound" was generally the result of a show day. However, the Duke willed it so, and Mr. Haggish was obliged to comply.

It was with great satisfaction, after two days' confinement to the house, that our friend Mr. Bunting arrayed himself in his hunting costume—smart new scarlet, with anonymous buttons, white tops, and leathers to match. He was not one of the "fine old English gentlemen-school" of sportsmen, with their queer-cut coats, ugly drabs, and inky pig-jobber-like boots. His was the gay butterfly costume, further enlivened with a heart's-ease, embroidered blue cravat, a pink-striped shirt, with carbuncle studs and a worked buff vest, all covered with foxes heads. Having made a middling breakfast, he got on his spurs, and, after a satisfactory survey of himself in the mirror, with palpitating heart went clonk, clonk, clonking down stairs. Arrived in the yard, he gave his whip a crack to announce his approach, when the stable-door flew open, and Owen Ashford's gray head protruded at the portals.

The first thing that struck our friend was that the bridle was very bad. "Oh dear, the bridle was very bad!" That, however, was immediately eclipsed by the saddle, which indeed passed all comprehension. If our excellent coadjutor, Leech, were to draw such a thing,

people would say it was a caricature—that such a saddle never was seen. And certainly it bore no affinity to the handsome horse on which it was placed, or to the delicate cream-coloured leathers with which it sought to be invested. It was old and black, and battered, and patched, and capped, in almost every part and place—patched, too, in the roughest, coarsest way, with great long dog-teeth-like stitches, instead of the beautiful little sewing that marks the production of the London workman. Even the very seat had given way in the middle and been stitched up into a thing that looked like a map of the lake of Geneva. Oh dear, Mr. Bunting was shocked, the whole being so unlike what were supplied to him by those great masters of arts in Oxford-street, who puzzle their customers so to know "which is which."

"Why what the deuce have you put these things on for?" exclaimed he, taking the weather-bleached rein of the old Pelham bridle between his finger and thumb.

"They are what I got with the osses, sir," replied Crop, eyeing his master's look of disgust.

"But you don't mean to say you've got nothing better than this!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, placing his hand on the lumpy pommel of the variegated saddle, with its frayed unmatching girths.

"Nothing else for this oss, sir," replied Crop.

"Oh dear, you must have made a mistake, and come away with the exercising things!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting.

"They are just what they gave me at the Mews," replied Crop.

"Oh dear, oh dear; but I would never have taken such things," rejoined his master, frowning. "Captain Chichester could never have ridden on such a pack-saddle thing as this," said Mr. Bunting, slapping it, adding, "Couldn't you see what sort of a thing it was?"

"There was a cover over it, sir," replied Crop, popping into the stable and producing one as he spoke.

"Why, the cover's as bad as the saddle!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, throwing it down, adding, "It's clearly a mistake, and they have given you the exercising things—deuced bad uns they are, too."

The question then was, what to do. There stood a swell all ready for hunting, and there stood a horse ready to go if he had but a decent saddle and bridle.

At this juncture sore-eyed Sam, who was as fertile in expedients as he was in excuses, suggested that "p'raps Mr. Buckwheat, the sporting farmer, could let them have what they wanted."

"Go and see," replied Mr. Bunting, adding to Crop, "and you be getting the other horse ready in case of accidents."

Crop, without telling his master that the other saddle and bridle were equally bad, then proceeded to strip the Exquisite; but ere he had got him rubbed over and turned round in the stall, Sam returned, bearing a very passable-looking bridle and saddle, which fortunately

fitted the gray not amiss, wherewith being invested, Mr. Bunting drew on his other doe-skin glove, and, gathering his whip, proceeded to mount the now greatly improved handsome animal. The important adjustments of seat and stirrups being next accomplished, he then drew rein, and feeling his horse gently with his heel, passed under the archway of the Lord Cornwallis Inn into the open space of Burton St. Leger. Here, as he got a glance of himself in Miss Muslin the

milliner's plate-glass window, he thought that Owen Ashford and he looked very well together. With this pleasing conviction he rose in his stirrups, and, putting his horse into a gentle trot, passed up the straggling street, to the great admiration of the women, who drew to their windows as though a telegraphic message had announced his approach. Great was their curiosity to know who he could be. All towns have their attendant toll-bars—the penalty of greatness; and

Hooker gate paid, the excitement of observation was over, while a liberal grass siding now enabled our hero to commence an estimate of his mount on Owen Ashford. For this purpose he put along a little quicker, and proceeded to think of him, and him only. The horse was weak under him—weak certainly, Mr. Bunting thought—not the springing elasticity of either the Bard or the Kitten. And now he began to wheeze and cough. "Confound the animal," growled Mr. Bunting, as he went grunting and wheezing up the green siding. "May have got something into his throat," thought he, easing him down into a walk. He then became a little better.

CHAPTER LXVII.

A SHOCKING BAD HAT.

Just as Owen Ashford had about coughed himself out, and Mr. Bunting was thinking of setting him agoing again, a start and half-look round from the horse announced an approach, and presently up trotted a weather-beaten-looking old gentleman, in a shocking bad hat, stained scarlet coat, hard, cracky, uncomfortable-looking cords, and rusty Napoleons, who saluted our hero with a hail fellow well met "Good morning!" as though he had known him all his life. This was Mr. Archy Ellenger, of Kids Hill, a well-known old fox-hunting ferret, who followed the chase more to get into peoples' houses and to fasten upon strangers than anything else. He had heard of Mr. Bunting's arrival, and had come round by Burnfoot Lane, in order to take him in the rear. Archy was quite a different sort of gentleman to the Jug, for he affected hospitality himself, was always upbraiding people for not breakfasting or coming to him overnight—had such a nice piece of crimped cod and a four-year leg of mutton, to which he would have added a woodcock or a dish of mince pies; but if any one was simple enough to come, Archy would show that he was great at the art of evasion. He lived in furnished lodgings, kept a couple of screws and a shandrydan vehicle to attach to their tails, wherein he scoured the country far and near. Having the reputation of wealth, and no one to leave it to, Archy was everybody's guest, though if many of his hosts had known that he had sunk his wherewithal in an annuity, he would not have been quite so welcome. There are Archy Ellengers in most countries—forward men who fasten themselves on to strangers, and pretend to introduce them to people whom they hardly know themselves.

The *tout ensemble*, however, was not at all likely to attract such a fastidious gentleman as our friend, and under ordinary circumstances

he would have shied him—at all events have shaken him off—before they got to the meet, just as a member of "White's" gets rid of a rustic at the top of St. James's Street; but after two days' solitary confinement there is scarcely anybody that a man can't put up with. Moreover the horseman's familiar manner made Mr. Bunting almost think that he had seen him before, but where he couldn't for the life of him imagine. The face was something like Harry Elstob's, only more wrinkled; but Harry would be above puckering a crape right up his hat to conceal its shabbiness. The figure was something like Willy Waugh's, of the Convolvulus Club, but the face didn't fit; besides, Willy didn't hunt, so it couldn't be him. However, there he was, and it was for Mr. Bunting to take him or leave him, as he liked. Mr. Bunting took him. "Good morning," replied he, returning Mr. Ellenger's salute, who then followed it up with a "here's a fine hunting day!"

"It is," replied Mr. Bunting, "and very acceptable after all the rain."

"*Very*," rejoined Ellenger, reining his badly-clipped dun with the familiar black stripe down its back alongside our hero.

Bunting then looked Ellenger over, and Ellenger looked him; Bunting thinking Ellenger was a queer-looking fellow, Ellenger thinking he would like to buy Bunting at his price and sell him at his own.

Bunting then spoke: "How far is it to the meet?—How far is it to the Holly Bush Inn?" asked he.

"Just over the hill—just over the hill," replied Mr. Ellenger, nodding onward as he spoke, adding, "plenty of time—plenty of time—no fear of being late with the Duke."

"What, he's unpunctual, is he?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"Terribly! terribly!" rejoined Mr. Ellenger, adding, "If he was half as keen about beginning as he is about leaving off, he would do."

"Not much of a sportsman then, I presume," observed Mr. Bunting.

"Not a bit of one—not a bit of one," rejoined Mr. Ellenger. "Just keeps hounds for show's sake—just keeps hounds for show's sake. Pack of curs and a red-herring would do quite as well for him."

Mr. Ellenger not having a vote or being otherwise available, was not admissible at Tergiversation Castle; hence his displeasure. He always abused the Duke well behind his back, and toadied him to his face.

Cough, wheeze, grunt, cough, now went Owen Ashford, again boring with his head to the ground.

"Your horse has got a little cold, I think," observed Mr. Ellenger, when the horse had done.

"I think he has," replied Mr. Bunting, carelessly, "or something in his throat."

Cough, wheeze, grunt, cough, went the horse again.

"*Cold*, I should say," continued Mr. Ellenger, drily.

Cough, wheeze, grunt, cough, repeated the horse, vehemently.

"Deuced like broken wind," muttered Mr. Ellenger to himself.

"Those stables at Burton St. Leger are not to be depended upon," observed he, aloud.

"Arn't they!" replied Mr. Bunting, adding, "What 's the matter with them?"

"No trade—no custom—never aired—cold and damp—uncomfortable. Wish I'd known you'd been coming, I'd have got you some good ones at Stobfield or Oldgate."

"Wonder who the deuce you are," again mused Mr. Bunting, looking his companion over—shabby clothes, bad horse, and all. He thought he must have met him before, and yet he couldn't tell where. It wasn't old Hetherington of Berkeley Street, and yet he was very like him.

Cough, wheeze, grunt, cough, again went Owen Ashford, in the most summary manner.

"If that horse is not broken-winded, I'm a Dutchman," observed Mr. Ellenger to himself, eyeing the catch of his flank. However, it was no business of his, and perhaps he was only riding him to cover. "Horse on?" at length asked he, thinking to test it.

"No," replied Mr. Bunting, "just jogging him on myself."

"So am I," rejoined Mr. Ellenger, trying to put a little liveliness into the dun with his off-side spur as he spoke.

Just then two horsemen, one dressed in a bottle-green coat, with a buff vest and white cords, riding a great staring four-year old bay, the other in fiddle-case boots and red shawl cravat and mufti generally, emerged from Brackenside Lane upon the road our friends were travelling, and were immediately hailed by Ellenger in the patronising way a red-coated man speaks to a dark one.

"Hollo! Jobling!" exclaimed he, addressing the gentleman in green, "what, are you for the fox! How go on the harriers?" Then before the master of Muggers had time to reply, Mr. Ellenger followed up the charge by touching Mr. Bunting on the arm with the crop of his whip, and saying, "Allow me to introduce my friend Mr. Jobling—Mr. Jonathan Jobling, master of the best pack of harriers in the world;" whereupon Mr. Bunting made a bow, and Jobling grinned more complacently than he would have done but for the compliment.

Ellenger then tried to trot Jonathan out, but the hare-hunter saw through him, and without noticing his next inquiry, "How many hares he had killed?" began talking to Mr. Bunting about the wet, the weather, and other indifferent subjects.

The man of the hat then joined the man in mufti, and thus they proceeded in pairs. As they neared the brow of Little Hay Hill, where the Quarry-house toll-bar embraces the four lane ends in its three-halfpenny grasp, Mr. Ellenger bellowed to Mr. Jobling, who was then in advance, "I've got sixpence, Job! I'll pay for all!" but when they reached the gate, and Mrs. Fakey stood with extended hand for the money, the sixpence was not to be found. Our hero at last had the pleasure of paying for all.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

A SHOCKING BAD HORSE.

Our toll-free friends having now gained the summit of Little Hay Hill, a goodly landscape appeared before them; in the far distance the town of Herdingford, with its lofty spire, then the tortuous windings of the silvery Dart meandering through the fertile meadows, next the ducal Castle on its stately eminence, and then a wide smiling vale, which at that distance looked extremely easy to cross. On the straight road full in front, a long cavalcade was approaching, foremost of which was old "Halth and Contantment," with the hounds and the numerous attendants in yellow. Then came a dribbling line of scarlets, and blacks, and browns, and greens, the wearers riding in threes and twos and singly.

"Great muster, seemingly," observed Mr. Jobling, eyeing the unwonted numbers.

"Got a great gun at the Castle—Prince of Potatoes, or something of that sort," observed Mr. Ellenger, laughing at his own wit.

"Then we shall have a show day, I fear—bag-fox or something of that sort, praps," observed the master of the harriers.

"Not unlikely," replied Mr. Ellenger, "provided any body will trust the Duke for one, *he—he—he, haw—haw—haw.*"

The Holly Bush was a great resort of drovers and people of that description, but since they took to the rail, the Bush has rather come down in the world, and is more supported by the sale of lemonade and other non-intoxicating beverages, than by that of old Sir John Barleycorn. It stands in the centre of a good country, Sunnyside Woods on the north, Shipton Green Grove on the south, Ravensdowne Craigs on the east, and Fernside Plantations on the west. Go which way a fox will, he can never get wrong. Though not so well adapted for a show meet as a park or a castle, it was better calculated for drawing a field, the roads being sound and good, and Haggish always showing sport when he could.

The fineness of the day, the badness of the previous ones, the fame of the country, and the attraction of a Prince, all conduced to a bumper, and people came whipping on wheels and spurring on steeds from all parts of the country, and great was the surprise and exclamations at unexpected encounters.

"Why Short! who would have thought of seeing you here!"

"What Cox! have you come all the way from Eddyford Edge? You are the boy for an early start. Wonder if you breakfasted over night."

"No, but I shaved," replied Cox, feeling his chin as he spoke.

Then when Mr. Haggish and the hounds came up, there were fresh exclamations, varied by inquiries as to who was at the castle, who on the road, and what Haggish would have to drink.

"Thank ye, just nothin at all, I'm obliged to ye," replied the veteran, touching the peak of his cap to the inquirer, adding, "hanting and dranking are just twa men's work."

"Oh, but a glass 'ill not hurt you," observed Mr. Wallower, the wool-stapler, who dearly loved one himself.

"O faith, but it's just the first glass that does all the mischief: one glass begats another till a thing becomes foo, and no fit to take care of itsalf—halth and contantment's my motto," added he, turning with his hounds into the little grass-field in front of the Inn as he spoke.

"Now lat them have a roll," exclaimed he to the amateur whips who were for driving them up to him like a flock of sheep. And forthwith the hounds began rolling and stretching themselves on the green sward, uttering occasional notes of delight at the prospect of the coming sport.

Fortunately for Billy Brown, the corpulent landlord of the Holly Bush Inn, all the field were not of Mr. Haggish's way of thinking, and black bottles of whiskey, rum, and gin, began to appear and circulate freely to mutual "good healths" and "good sports." And so a good many shillings and sixpences thus passed into Brown's pocket. Having wetted their whistles, the parties at length began looking at their watches; twenty minutes past time and no Duke.

"His Grace will not be coming," exclaimed Mr. Archy Ellenger, "Hadn't you better throw off, Jock?"

"His Grace *is* coming, and the Earl too," replied Mr. Haggish, wondering what business Mr. Ellenger had to "Jock" him.

"Coming! aye, so is Christmas," sneered Mr. Ellenger, adding, "It's no use people advertising for one hour, and coming at another."

"Not a bit," assented Mr. Bagnal, the butcher, who wanted a little bill of the Duke, and was thinking of dunning him.

At length, as even the most patient of the now numerous field were beginning to grumble, a something was seen in the distance, and presently the red and yellow liveries of the Duke loomed in perspective, and all eyes turned the way they were coming. There were out-riders both before and behind, who came working their arms in the great-exertion-little-progress-way peculiar to the riders of half-tired horses. The postilions, who had been nursing their horses, presently began to spur and exert themselves in order to come up with a dash, which they did to the door of the Holly Bush Inn. Hats and caps then rose from the heads of those arrived. Archy Ellenger's

shocking bad hat making as great an effort as any of them. These salutations being condescendingly returned by the noble inmates of the carriage, the powdered footmen let down the steps, and the Prince, the Duke, and the Earl descended, and entered the parlour of the Holly

Bush Inn, there to revise their attire. This they were not long in doing, and they presently returned, all red, and gold, and fancy colours, the Duke and his Lordship wearing leathers and tops, the Prince's nother man being encased in a pair of superlatively shining Napoleons.

It was a pity that the great men's horses were not so good as their clothes, or the turn out would have been very respectable. The Duke, to be sure, had a good one for himself, but Lord Marchhare having lamed the bay on which Leech depicted him piloting Miss Rosa, was reduced to a weedy little chestnut of one of the whips, while the Prince was put upon a great ambling, high-crested, hollow-backed white, that looked more like a trumpeter's horse than a hunter. However, its flowing mane and abundant tail pleased the foreigner, who having mounted, began ambling and curvetting and caprioling among the crowd. But he had to earn his keep yet by having such of

the field presented to him as the Duke thought would pay for the honour; and forthwith much of the same sort of scene ensued that was enacted at the *battue*—people being brought up and introduced whom the stranger would forget the next moment. To most of these the affable Prince offered some sage observation, such as "It vos von vare fine day for foxing—should kill many dozens of them he thought," his Highness thinking that in fox-hunting, as in pheasant-shooting, quantity was the criterion of sport. Meanwhile Mr. Haggish sat on his great black horse Galashiels, tapping his boot with his whip, and grinding his teeth in disgust at the sight of the man who had shot one.

At length it came to Jock's turn to be noticed, and addressing his huntsman, the Duke inquired what he was going to draw first.

"Wall, what your Grace pleases," replied Jock, raising his cap, "I was thinking of going to Sunnyside at once."

"Not Newham End?" replied the Duke, who always liked to sport an opinion.

"Newham End's savan miles from here, your Grace," replied Haggish with a smile. "Nevertheless, if your Grace wishes it, we can go."

"Ah, I forgot," replied the Duke, "I thought we were at the Mulberry Tree at Burtontongue Ferry. We'll go to Sunnyside at once, then."

Jock then got great Galashiels by the head, and calling his hounds together led the way, thus leaving the meet three-quarters of an hour after the appointed time. But time was made for vulgar souls, not for Dukes and Princes. A general move then ensued, glasses were paid for, horses remounted, and the Holly Bush Inn presently resumed its wonted solitude.

The Prince proceeded at a sort of amphitheatrish amble between Mr. Nelson Brown of Barrow Hill, and Mr. Rennison Reveley of Victoria Green, while the Duke pushed about, doing the agreeable in his own peculiar way, mangling people's names, calling Hobson Robson, and Robson Hobson; asking after single men's wives, and the wives of some who were dead.

Meanwhile Mr. Bunting was assiduously waited upon by Mr. Ellenger, who kept introducing people to him, though from want of knowing our friend's name it was only a one-sided proceeding. The intervals were filled up with accounts of the country, and the marvellous runs Ellenger had seen, wherein the narrator had always borne a conspicuous, if not a principal part. During all these varied proceedings, Owen Ashford had kept up a sort of running commentary of his own, in the shape of coughs, wheezes, and grunts, causing parties to look anxiously round, for there is nothing more appalling to a sportsman's ear than a cough. It is so suggestive of "stop and go home."

It is a point with some people, whether to tell a man he has lost a

shoe, or let him find it out himself, or leave some one else to tell; the disgust at the information being oftentimes greater than the gratitude at being told, and an over-reach, a stub, and a cough, may be placed under the same category. Indeed a cough is perhaps more exempt than the rest, for the rider has a better right to know all about it than any body else, and if he does not think it worth noticing, there is no reason why any one else should.

This sort of logic seemed to prevail on the Holly Bush Inn day, for though many sportsmen started and looked round to see whence the short grunty cough proceeded, and Jonathan Jobling observed to Mr. Cordy Brown, the sporting butcher of Mayfield, that somebody's horse would be better in the house, none of them thought of riding up to Mr. Bunting, and asking him if he did not think he had better go home.

So our hero proceeded in the great cavalcade, occasionally trying what a little counter-irritation in the shape of a touch of the spur would do towards stopping the disagreeable noise. But Owen Ashford would have it out, and went coughing, and wheezing, and grunting, regardless alike of kicking, or jagging, or nursing.

Presently a divergence to the right through a line of well-hung gates, brought the field full in face of the cover, and a momentary halt on a strip of green-sward outside, enabled the last of the late comers to get their horses and those in attendance to draw their girths, and make the final preparations for the chase. Meanwhile a couple of whips had scuttled away to their places, and the white bridle gate being at length opened, at a nod of assent from old Haggish, the glad pack went tearing head over heels into cover. Then the cheer of the veteran sounded o'er the scene, and the cracks of the whips re-echoed among the hills.

Hark! a hound speaks—a light note, and doubtful, soon silenced by Haggish's rate—"Cradulous! Cradulous! what are you after, Cradulous?" followed by a crack of the whip. And Cradulous slinks away at the sound. Haggish goes on slowly and carefully, giving the hounds plenty of time to sniff and try each likely haunt, Jock being of opinion that foxes sometimes sleep in the daytime as well as man. Now the cover widens, and Jock's cheery note is heard on the high ride. There is rare lying in every part, any yard of which may hold a fox. And the hounds seem to like it too, for they quest and feather three or four on a line—half inclined to speak—hardly daring to do so—"Have at him, Rallywood! old man;" holloas Jock to a favourite old finder, adding to himself, with a knowing jerk of the head, "he's been there, for a guinea." And Rallywood thinks so too, for after a flourish round a patch of struggling gorse he gives a low whimper, which Madrigal, dropping her stern, endorses, and away they race up the green pathway beyond. Now the scent fails them, and, after a momentary hesitation, they make an inward turn.

Prosperous then takes a fling in advance, and with a deeper note proclaims him on—Rallywood, Rantaway, Venturesome, Pillager, Rantipole, scorn to cry, and the body of the pack strive to the point.

Hark! what a crash. They've found him. "Now," as Beckford says, "where are all your sorrows and your cares, ye gloomy souls! Or where your pains and aches, ye complaining ones! One holloa has dispelled them all—What a crash they make! And echo seemingly takes pleasure to repeat the sound. The astonished traveller forsakes his road, lured by its melody; the listening ploughman now stops his plough; and every distant shepherd neglects his flock, and runs to see him break. What joy! what eagerness in every face!"

Mr. Haggish has got great Galashiels by the head, and goes blob, blob, blobbing up the deep holding ride after his darlings. His eyes sparkle with delight, and he is quite another Mr. Haggish to what he was when eyeing the Prince before the Holly-bush Inn. His Highness too tears along with a loose seat and a loose rein on his great white charger, looking as though he would very soon stop him. Luckily, the old nag can take care of himself, and will shut up as soon as he thinks he has had enough. The Prince, however, expects each moment will be the last, and wonders what they can have done with the guns—why they are not doubling the fox up with one as he did. They will not kill many dozen, if they take so much time over von, thought he.

That one, however, is a good one, and runs the cover's utmost limits, anxious to break, but headed back in all his endeavours. Now by the foot people, now by the horse, now by a combination of both. What a host of enemies the poor animal has! He should have a dozen lives instead of one, especially with such a skirting pack as the Duke's to contend with. The chorus increases, and even the terriers are squeaking at him. They'll kill him if he doesn't get away.

"Tallyho! there he goes across the ride, whisking his well-tagged brush, right under the Prince's trooper's nose, who hasn't the sense to draw the horse aside for the hounds to pass. Over they go, tearing and screeching, each hound working as though he would eat the fox himself. A sudden lull ensues! The echoing wood is still—*who-hoop!* cries Lord Marchhare, thinking the performance is over.

"Not a bit of it," replies Mr. Haggish, spurring and cracking Galashiels through the tangled brake to the spot. The fox has laid down in an open drain, and the hounds have over-run the scent. Now Jock tries to recover him.

"*Yooi, wind him!* Rallywood, good dog—*yooi, push him!*" Jock making the cover ring with the crack of his ponderous whip. Still all is silent. Not a note, save those of the chatterers on the ride.

"Very odd," observes Mr. Cordy Brown, who thought that hunted foxes never laid down.

"Very," asserts the master of harriers.

"The Duke's dogs are not worth a button," mutters Mr. Archy Ellenger.

Tallyho ! There's a holloa at the low end of the wood, and Jock getting Galashiels by the head, crams away to the place. All right! He's gone !

> "Hark ! what loud shouts
> Re-echo thro' the grove ! He breaks away !
> Shrill horns proclaim his flight. Each straggling hound
> Strains o'er the lawn to reach the distant pack ;
> 'Tis triumph all, and joy."

Not all joy, perhaps, though we dare say it would have been in Somerville's times when he wrote the above lines. Already the vision of Thorneyburn Brook and Butterlow fences arise in the minds of those who do not like bathing or bullfinching. Still it is a case of do all you can, and

> "dream the rest,"

and each man elbows and legs himself out of cover, resolved to see as much as he can. Prince, Peers, peasants, all mixed up in heterogeneous confusion. The "get away" from a fox cover is the real leveller of rank, far more efficacious than any Reform bill.

We are sorry we cannot accompany the horsemen in their flight over Longhope Hill and down into the Hewish Vale, tell how the war-horse stopped with the Prince at Muddiford Pond, and Lord Marchhare sending his chestnut at some impracticable palings, lighted on his head, and knocked his hat-crown out. How the Duke of Tergiversation thought he had had enough at Snowden Mill, and Archy Ellenger at Harper's Green. How the field gradually tailed off, and Galashiels gradually gave in till Haggish deserted him at farmer Muttons, and finished the run on foot—"who-hooping" the fox at Toddlewood Hill. All this we must leave, to return to our hero Mr. Bunting in Sunnyside Wood.

The rides there, as we said before, were very deep and holding, well calculated to take the fiery edge off even the most sportive tailed horse, let alone one that could hardly go on the road, and Owen Ashford's distress was painfully apparent to every one except his rider. Mr. Bunting thought it must be want of work, which would most likely go off after a gallop. So he just jogged him up and down the rides with the rest of the field, the cry of the hounds animating the horse into extra exertion. But nature will not be said nay to, and ere the grand *Tallyho !* Owen Ashford had done his "*possible*," finished before he had well begun. Nevertheless, Mr. Bunting held him on, hoping he might get the second wind peculiar to well-bred horses. Perhaps he might be better in the open. So he took his turn at the lower of the two gaps in the ragged wood-fence leading out of the cover, and with a desperate effort planted the gallant grey in the middle of it. There he stood coughing, and wheezing, and rocking-

horsing, unable to get either backwards or forwards. The horsemen behind him then took the other gap, and in this undignified position our friend was doomed to see the last of the field. Presently Billingford, the woodman, came panting up, and, advising Mr. Bunting to dismount, applied his brawny shoulder to the horse's quarters, and fairly thrust him over into the next field.

"He must be bad, surely!" exclaimed Billingford, as the horse lay heaving and gasping like one of Mr. Rarey's "Incorrigibles," after a lesson, a very different looking animal indeed to what he was in Sligo Mews.

"I think he must," replied Mr. Bunting, wondering what Captain Cavendish Chichester would say if he killed him.

"I'd get him up, and get him into the house, if I was you," observed the woodman.

"Well, I think that would be the best thing," replied our hero, "only the question is, how to do it."

"He heaves heavily," observed the man, eyeing Owen Ashford's flank, "wish he mayn't have got the staggers." Most people have some pet disease with which they invest every horse that is ill.

Just then Owen Ashford raised his head, and after staring about him with a fixed unmeaning glare, he got first on his hind-quarters, and then after a rabbit-like sit, with a desperate grunt, raised himself wholly on all fours. There he stood more like the wooden horse in a saddler's shop than anything likely to go.

"He 's surely been very sair ridden that hus," observed Billingford, eyeing his distended nostrils suspiciously.

"Not a bit of it," replied Mr. Bunting, "He 's hardly been out of a walk."

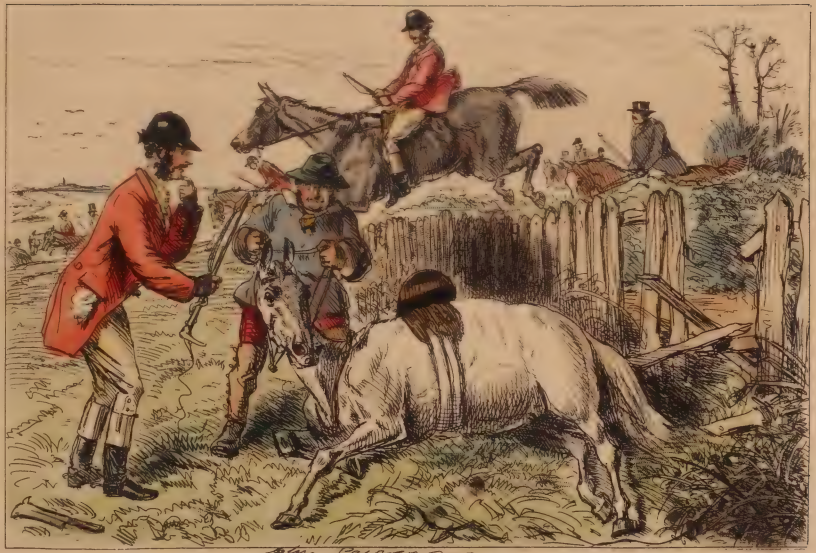
"Then he mun be very bad somehow," rejoined the man, "I would get him home, gin I ware you."

"I wish I had him home," replied Mr. Bunting, eyeing the horse's rigid frame.

"I'd slack his girths a bit, sir, I'd slack his girths," observed the man, still conning Owen over.

Mr. Bunting did slack his girths, and the horse appeared relieved by the operation, after a good cough, wheeze, grunt, he dropped his head, and began to nibble at the grass by the rail side. That was encouraging, and after getting his bearings from the man and inquiring where he would find a veterinary surgeon, Mr. Bunting gave Billingford a shilling for his trouble; and horse in hand, set out to work his way homewards on foot, to the great disadvantage of his boots.

Poor Owen was very weak and tottering at first, and went coughing and grunting, and sobbing, as though he would break his heart; but he gradually picked up when he got upon the hard road, so much so indeed, that, after rising Little Hay Hill again, Mr. Bunting, tired of

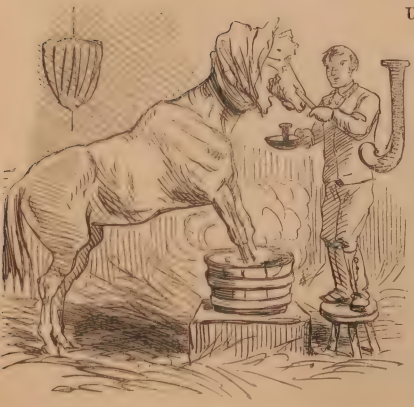


Mr. Bunting's Shocking Bad Horse!

walking, and feeling for his "Bartleys," inveigled the horse alongside a field-gate, when drawing his girths, he deposited himself very gently in the saddle, and then proceeded at a foot's pace along the green strip by the side of the road. And with grunts, and groans, and occasional stoppages to stare, poor Owen Ashford at length began to go not so far amiss, though the country-people who saw him all thought the Duke's hounds must have had a tarrible run.

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE SURPRISE.



JUST as our hero had got his sick horse nursed so far on his way home, as to about the place where Archy Ellenger overtook him in the morning, the animal, pricking his ears, gave a sudden start, and looking a-head, a flowing grey habit appeared upon the scene, borne by a careering white pony. It was now Mr. Bunting's turn to start, for though an unfriendly hedge immediately concealed it from his view, a certain inward something whispered it was *her*. "Her" certainly he thought, and his heart throbbed at the sight. Another instant and the invidious hedge, descending into a cut and laid one, revealed the accuracy of the conjecture. "Her" it certainly was, in flowing ringlets too, which danced merrily in the sun to the motion of the pony. Mr. Goldspink's opinion had come to her ears, and

caused Rosa to resume her *ante*-Roseberry-Rocks-style of dressing her bright silken tresses.

Miss started too, for between ourselves, gentle reader, she thought, at first sight, that the approaching horseman was Lord Marchhare, and the worthlessness of the gipsy's prophecy flashed upon her mind—What, if after all she should be a duchess! The fates seemed propitious to the idea. As she got nearer however, the delusion was gradually dispelled, for beneath the black cap she now recognised first the dark whiskers, and then the familiar features of our friend.

"Why, Mr. Bunting!" exclaimed she, opening wide her beautiful blue eyes, as she reined in her ambling white palfrey beside him.

"Why, Mr. Bunting, who would have thought of seeing you here!" tendering her pretty little primrose-coloured kid-gloved hand as she spoke—half wondering if the gipsy was going to be right after all.

"Why, Miss Rosa, who would have thought of seeing you!" responded our delighted friend, seizing the proffered hand and pressing it fervently, adding, "This is indeed an unexpected pleasure."

Up then came Old Gaiters, the groom gardener, on the yawning ewe-necked bay mare, which had been left immeasurably in the lurch by the quick-footed volatile pony. Gaiters and the mare had many a weary trash about the country after Miss Rosa, that neither his age nor the qualities of his steed qualified him for. Having succeeded in stopping the great boring brute, a few yards below them, he now sat staring and wondering who the smart gentleman in scarlet could be, and thinking he might do for his lady. Being down wind, Gaiters's position would have been rather inconvenient if the parties had had anything particular to say, but being chiefly confined to questions and answers it did not make much matter.

"And have you had a run?" asked Miss Rosa, as soon as the proper Privett Grove enquiries were over, "Have you had a run?" repeated she, with evident interest.

"Why, yes—no, (hem) yes," replied Mr. Bunting in the hesitating sort-of-way of a man who does not know much about it.

"A good one!" exclaimed she with undiminished zeal.

"Why, yes, no, yes, in fact I hardly can tell you," replied he, "for my horse is'nt well, and I was obliged to pull up at the end of (hem) time."

"What! have you had a fall?" now asked Miss Rosa, as she saw Owen Ashford's dirty side.

"My horse has" replied Mr. Bunting dryly, adding, "he's not quite up to the mark you see—got a little cold in coming down—so I thought it best to give in."

Just then Owen Ashford gave a hearty confirmatory "*cough, wheeze, grunt.*"

"Ah, I see he has," rejoined Miss Rosa. "Must have his feet put

"Who would have thought of seeing you"

in warm water and a little gruel, when he goes to bed; but tell me," added she, "who was out?"

"Who was out?" repeated Mr. Bunting, "Who was out? Ah, there you ask me a question I can hardly answer. I was like the new boy in the school you see, where, though they all knew me, I didn't know them."

"Well, was Lord Marchhare there?" asked Miss Rosa, coming at once to the point.

"Lord Marchhare was there," replied Mr. Bunting, "also the Duke, and a Prince somebody."

"Prince Pirouetteza," suggested Miss Rosa.

"I dare say that was the name," said Mr. Bunting carelessly, "a beardy gentleman on a capering white horse, who rode like a trooper."

"And which way did the hounds go?" asked Miss Rosa.

"Oh, over the hills and far away. I haven't the slightest idea where. One hill is much the same as another to a stranger."

"True," assented Miss Rosa, thinking she might as well give up her intended hound hunt, and accompany her faithful beau on his homeward way.

With this resolution, she touched her pony lightly with her pink-tasselled riding whip, and Mr. Bunting giving Owen Ashford a hint with his heel to proceed, the two passed Old Gaiters, who presently getting his horse hauled round the same way, the trio proceeded on their homeward way.

The reality of the scene being now realised, Miss dismissed her Marchhareish ideas, and proceeded to talk to her watering-place acquaintance, Mr. Bunting, asked when he came, where he was going, as though she hadn't the slightest idea what had brought him down into the country. So they proceeded at a pace peculiarly adapted to Owen Ashford's infirmities, along the nice grass-sided road cheered with the rays of a bright winter's sun.

At length a harsh matter-of-fact white guide post stood in the angle of two road ends, one black hand pointing to Burton St. Leger, another to Mayfield, and Owen Ashford giving such a series of grunts as sounded very like coming to a period or full stop, the interesting pair at length parted, Miss again shaking hands with our hero, and assuring him that THEY (not Mamma only) would be happy to see him at Privett Grove, and then cantering away to announce the all-important arrival to her parent. And our delighted friend having followed her as far as he could with his eyes, then proceeded leisurely along the reverse road, inwardly congratulating himself on the result of the day's adventures, and wondering what would be the result of the expedition.

CHAPTER LXX.

THE EXQUISITE.

As our now thrice-happy hero descended Holmeside Hill, which commands a full view of Burton St. Leger, and the surrounding country, he saw a well-muffled-up man riding a badly clipped brown horse with a big knee, who checking his horse as they approached, stopped altogether as they met.

"Mr. Bunting isn't it, sir?" asked the man hesitatingly, touching his hat as he spoke.

"It is," replied our hero, wondering what anybody could want with him.

"I wish to speak a word with you sir, if you please sir," said the man, sawing away at his hat.

"Well, speak away," replied Mr. Bunting.

"I much fear that horse of yours is broken-winded, sir," observed the man, eyeing our friend intently as he spoke.

"What horse!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, wondering how the man could know anything about Owen Ashford's ailments.

"Well, sir, the horse I've been seeing—the horse at the Cornwallis Inn—the bay horse."

"The bay horse!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting—"the bay horse! Why you don't mean to say there's anything the matter with the *bay* horse?"

"Indeed, I do, sir," replied the man solemnly.

"How do you know?" demanded Mr. Bunting anxiously.

"Why, sir, they sent for me to come and see him. I'm Mr. Kerby the veterinary surgeon, and they sent for me to come and see him—he'd stopped in his gallop at exercise, and they could hardly get him home."

"Stopped in his gallop," muttered Mr. Bunting, "stopped in his gallop—what business had they to gallop him? Dare say, they've done it themselves."

"Oh, no, sir," replied Mr. Kerby, with a semi-smile and shake of his head. "It's an old complaint sir,—an old complaint."

"Well, but what makes you think he's broken-winded?" demanded our hero.

"I *see* he's broken-winded, sir—there's no mistake about that, can tell a broken-winded horse in the dark."

"Humph!" mused Mr. Bunting, feeling that as he had never had a broken-winded horse, he was not in a position to contradict the Vet.

There is nothing like experience for making people wise. The man who has had a splented or a spavined horse is always looking out for splents and spavins. A man who has had a glandered one invests every horse with a running at the nose with glanders. So with other complaints.

"I don't think *that* horse is altogether as he should be," now observed Mr. Kerby, after a pause, during which he had a good stare at Owen Ashford.

"What—this!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, slapping the horse's side.

"Indeed, I think not," replied the man, "I don't like the heaving of his flanks."

"Why you don't mean to say he 's broken-winded too?" replied Mr. Bunting incredulously.

"I much suspect he is," rejoined the man, who had wormed the history of the exchange of horses out of the groom.

"Nay, then!" ejaculated Mr. Bunting, superciliously.

"Will you allow me to try him, sir?" asked Mr. Kerby.

"With all my heart," replied Mr. Bunting, dropping the reins quite resignedly, thinking he might as well know the worst at once.

Mr. Kerby then alighted, and leaving his own sedate nag to crop the short herbage by the road-side, he approached Owen Ashford, and under the well-known pretence of hitting him in the ribs, elicited the expected grunt.

"*I said so*," observed the man, with a nod of confidence.

"What! do you mean to say he's broken-winded too?" asked Mr. Bunting in disgust.

"Just as bad as the other," replied the man, with a chuck of his chin—"Just as bad as the other."

"The deuce!" growled Mr. Bunting.

"Never saw two brokener winded animals in all my life," observed the Vet, half to himself and half to our hero.

A gleam of light then shone upon our friend's mind, and he began to perceive, what we doubt not the sporting reader has seen all along—namely, what caused the mirth and merriment of the people in the Sligo Mews. The advertisement, like most specious offers, was too good to be true, and our hero had aided the robbery by his own proposal for an exchange of horses. But for this he would most likely only have lost a fifty pound deposit and got a broken-winded animal for the money, whereas, in addition to his losing his horses, he was saddled with two broken-winded ones. This was very soon painfully apparent, for happening to turn that very evening to the too seductive *Times'* Supplement, he found the horse temptation had been changed from the loan of two splendid hunters into an advertisement of a superb lady's horse for sale. Thus it ran:

"A CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

"HIGHLY BROKEN LADY'S HORSE!—To be disposed of for one-half its real value, or let, subject to approval of purchase, 'JEWEL,' one of the neatest and most highly broken LADY'S HORSES in the metropolis, with saddle, bridle, and everything complete. This animal is perfection, both in action, temper, docility, and appearance, and has been constantly ridden by a lady up to the present time, whose great anxiety is to get it well placed. Colour silver dun, with flowing mane and tail, Arab-like head, with clean legs and fashionable action. Any length of trial allowed. To save trouble, no dealer need apply. Ask for Matthew, Miss Holloway's groom, 51 A, Sligo Mews, Rochester Square."

And thus the inhabitants of Sligo Mews are kept in a constant state of amusement by watching the flys that flock to each fresh advertisement; stout gentlemen with corpulent umbrellas hurrying up from the country thinking to do the generous at a cheap rate; languishing young gentlemen, with hands up to the hilts in their peg-top trowser-pockets, wondering if the "Jewel" would do for dear Mary Anne or Eleanor Jane; verdant gentlemen thinking to get a ride for nothing, and wonderfully disappointed at being asked for a "deposit;" knowing grooms passing on with a smile as soon as "Matthew" presented himself, and less confident coachmen hesitating whether or not to go in according to master's or mistress's orders. Often and rapidly as A51 is cleared out, Aaron Levy the landlord fills up the vacancy with fresh Cranleys and Matthews's, so brisk is the trade, and so yielding the seams of British greenness and greediness.

One reason why this horse-cheating prospers is that parties are ashamed to admit they have been duped, and part with the poor animals to the first person who makes them an offer, or who perhaps will take them in a gift. This is generally some confederate of the swindlers who thus get them back to operate with again under other names. Indeed a suspicious-looking stranger arrived at the Malt-Shovel Inn at Burton St. Leger, with a packet of pens and general stationery, and had several dialogues with sore-eyed Sam as they lounged against the railings in front of the Lord Cornwallis Inn, the burthen of which generally was that he wondered such a gentleman as Mr. Bunting would ride a broken-winded oss, for which he expressed his willingness to give sometimes three, sometimes four, and sometimes even as much as four pound ten. Indeed, at length he got so valiant that he wouldn't mind giving ten pounds for the two, if it would be any accommodation to the "Squire." And there can be no doubt that where the whole thing turns upon looks, a five pound note would be extremely well invested upon a horse that would immediately convert the five pound note into fifty or perhaps a hundred.

No one, taking either Owen Ashford or the Exquisite out of the stable on trial, would hesitate to deposit a fifty pound note or give a cheque on his banker, if he had not the money with him, for that

amount, conditional on the safe return of the horse; indeed would think he was let rather cheaply off for that amount. Half an hour however, would undeceive him, but when he came back he might knock and ring a long time at 51 A before he got admitted. Meanwhile all Sligo Mews would be alive from one end to the other, and numerous would be the inquiries if he didn't wish he "might get it."

It may appear cruel, but considering the torture these poor animals undergo to furbish them up for their share of the deception, it would be a greater kindness for a dupe to give them to the nearest horse-slaughterer rather than prolong their existence by selling them back to these barbarous ruffians. The dupe would at all events aid in the suppression of the fraud, as far as he was concerned, an object that we hope to promote by thus detailing the adventures of Captain Cavendish Chichester's horses.

CHAPTER LXXI.

PRIVETT GROVE.

Mr. Bunting did not accommodate the peripatetic stationer with his stud, but got Mr. Kerby, the veterinary surgeon, to patch them up as well as he could for walking purposes. By judicious feeding a broken-winded animal may be made available for slow work and quiet purposes. Having ascertained through the medium of the electric telegraph that there was no such person then known at 51 A, Sligo Mews, as Peter Crankey, Captain Cavendish Chichester's groom, or any such horses there as his own Bard or the Kitten, Mr. Bunting became somewhat resigned to his unlucky fate, and treated the ailments of his horses as colds they had caught on the journey down. It would ill become a man of his knowledge and experience to admit he had been victimised in any such ridiculous way. So he determined to accommodate himself to their coughing, and consoled himself with the thought that it would have been worse if they had been glandered. If he could not hunt them, he could at all events ride to the place, that he had adopted the pleasures of the chase for the purpose of getting to, so Mr. Kerby, having done all he could in the way of mitigation of their complaint, and prescribed the best course of treatment, Mr. Bunting wrote to London for new saddles and bridles in lieu of the wretched things he had got with the horses, and prepared for carrying out his designs in another quarter. Meanwhile he added to his obligations to Mr. Buckwheat by borrowing a second set of accoutrements of him for his groom's horse.

We need not say there was great excitement in Privett Grove

in consequence of Mr. Bunting's arrival in the country, Mamma and Miss both felt that matters were coming to a crisis, and upon the right application of the little words "Yes" and "No" depended a world of comfort, or the contrary. Whichever way it was, they could not but feel that they might sometimes think they had taken the wrong man. It therefore behoved them to be most wary and circumspect. Mr. Bunting was certainly a most agreeable man, but then they knew little or nothing of him (intrinsically at least), while, as regarded Jasper, there was no doubt whatever about him, though he certainly was a cool indifferent suitor. Even Miss Rosa's return to ringlets, which was all done to please him, seemed to produce little or no effect upon him. "Ringlets," said he, eyeing the rich glossy curls—"Ringlets, well I think you look better in them!" was all he said.

Now, however, it was clear that Mr. Bunting's presence would quicken him if there was any quicksilver in him; at all events Mrs. Goldspink would see that it was not a case of necessity, and instruct Jasper accordingly. And though it might perhaps be better if Jasper were to declare first, yet there was no reason why Mr. Bunting should not be encouraged and put in the right way. Hitherto Miss Rosa had played her cards with the utmost skill and discretion, holding Bunting on but yet keeping him back, just as a skillful sportsman rides a young horse up to a leap, but won't let him go over till he likes. How much longer that game could be played was now the question for consideration. There could be no doubt that Mr. Bunting was safe, or he would not have come down into the country, and as it was clear Miss Rosa could not take both, there was no reason why she should not take the best. The matter was one of deep and serious consideration, and Mrs. McDermott well knew what a commotion our hero's appearance would make in the country where courting could not be carried on upon the double entry principle of large towns. Matters, therefore, had now about come to a crisis, and Mr. Bunting, it was clear, must be disposed of one way or other. So thought our friend himself, who, as soon as calling time approached on the day after the road interview, with the aid of Bonville perfected an elaborate costume for the occasion. Crop and the coughing horses too turned out not so far amiss, and another friendly sun smiled brightly on the scene.

A swell in London is a swell anywhere, and Mr. Bunting's smart hat, purple and black tie, careful collar, curiously cut coat, ample pantaloons, and highly polished boots, contrasted with the rough, harsh, matter-of-fact overcoats and mud defiers of the people he met on the road. Great was the curiosity he excited as he wandered leisurely along, trying to keep down the coughs by the evenness of the pace. Mr. Hodge told Mrs. Hodge when he got home that he had met *such* a smart gentleman, with such a smart groom after him; and Mrs. Hodge wondered who it could be—where he came from, and whither he was going. Mr. and Mrs. Woodbine met Bunting as they

drove the steady old family horse, who went dwelling along in his trot as though he half thought he was pulling the cart and ought to be walking; and the Woodbines were lost in astonishment at the glossy lavender-coloured kids!—clean on, too. And did you see the groom's buck-skins, boots, and belt round his waist? The latter was considered the greatest curiosity, and old Jack Chaffey, the road man, who worked by the day, ceased revolving the mud, and resting his chin on the top of his scraper, asked every man woman and child who came along what it could mean. Dear me, he had never seen such a thing as that before, and he had seen a vast of queer sights, but never such a queer sight as that before. And not being able to get any satisfactory solution of the mystery, he revolved the mud a few more times, and calmly awaited the coming of the next traveller. Meanwhile Mr. Bunting held leisurely on at his own pace, wholly absorbed on the object of his mission, so much so, indeed, that although

he had studied the map pretty accurately so as not to have to ask any questions, he overshot the Crosland turn, and was riding away for Old Bridge End, when he met Margery Meggison, the rag gatherer,

who, in reply to his inquiry if he was anywhere near Privett Grove, exclaimed, "Privett Grove! why, you be riding away from it!" Margery then having told him so much, thought to have her innings, and said, "It'll be Mrs. McDermott's you're wanting, I 'spose?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Bunting, boldly.

"*Or Miss, whether, nor?*" asked the crone, fixing her little beady black eyes intently upon him.

"Well, either," smiled Mr. Bunting.

"Ah, Miss will do best for you," replied Margery; "Miss will do best for you. Now," continued she, "do you see yon stacks by the barn on the hill?"

"Yes," replied our friend.

"Well, then, a little to the left of them are some trees. That's Privett Grove. Follow this road till you come to the turn, then take the one to the right and it leads past the gate."

"Thanks," said Mr. Bunting, chucking her a shilling.

"Good luck to you!" exclaimed the woman, delighted at his generosity.

Mr. Bunting then raised a short trot to get a little in advance of his informant. He was presently at the turn, presently at the gate, and presently in sight of the beloved spot.

Privett Grove was a pretty place even in winter, perhaps nicer to look at than to live in. It was an up-and-downy, in-and-outy sort of place with odd doors, odd windows, odds and ends altogether. You went up a step into the dining-room, and down a step into the drawing-room; the larder was where the library ought to be, and the scullery had usurped the place of the shoe-house. However, it was no time for criticism, and Mr. Bunting felt as if he could love everything about it—the road, the rails, the roller, the very chimney-pots themselves. It wore a holiday aspect both inside and out; for Old Gaiters having duly discharged the duties of groom had undertaken that of gardener, and scratched the road with a rake from the gate up to the door. All the stray leaves that had been careering about for weeks and weeks, were now caught and consigned to the cow-house. The drawing-room was put into a sort of semi-review order, the Kidderminster carpet uncovered, but the flowered chintz allowed to remain on the sofa and chairs. If, however, the sofa was covered, its worsted-worked cushions were exhibited in a way that looked as if they were going to be raffled for. There was that triumph of the art, Melrose by moonlight, all worked by Miss Rosa before she was fourteen: there was Slingsby Priory, and Coppenthorpe Castle, and a Cockatoo of most conspicuous colours. We don't know how many stocking heels might be left undarned in order that she might work them, but that is not to the point. Our old acquaintance John Thomas was prepared to expect company, while Perker, the maid, saw by the way Miss Rosa twisted and turned and examined herself in each glass in succession,

that she was bent on display. She had on her new lilac and black droguet, her neat waist set off with a band and a rich cut steel clasp, an embroidered muslin collar and sleeves trimmed with lilac-coloured ribbon. Very neat shoes and stockings completed her costume, in which she smiled complacently on herself in the cheval glass. Still it was not surmised in the kitchen who was the cause of all this commotion, and it was not until Owen Ashford came coughing and grunting up to the house that Perker became alive to the importance of the occasion.

"My gracious!" exclaimed she, clasping her hands, "if here isn't Mr. What's-his name!" adding, "shall forget my own next." So

saying, she slipped noiselessly down the back stairs, ejaculating "Mr. Bunting!" and took up a position at the green baize-covered door connecting the little entrance hall with the back passage and offices.

Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, now went the bell, in reply to Crop's summons, who had dismounted for the purpose. "Clear the way, woman," cried the footman, hurrying up to where Perker was now listening, in her greatly distended petticoats. Having brushed past the impediment he let the door swing to upon her, and advanced becomingly up the entrance.

"Ladies at home?" now asked Mr. Bunting, in a careless sort of way, that but ill accorded with his feelings, giving at the same time a smile of recognition to the man.

"Yes, sir," replied the obsequious servant, bowing to the compli-

ment, whereupon Mr. Bunting alighted, feeling pretty well assured that the eyes of England were upon him, and proceeded to follow his pilot into the house—the beloved house that might be his, marble slab, Louis Quatorze clock, stuffed Ptarmigan and all. Passing all these, our hero, following the footman, turned to the right, and a bright red rug proclaimed the door of the room of presentation.

As they say first impressions are everything, it was lucky this was not Mr. Bunting's first appearance, for John Thomas, forgetting to warn him of the downward descent into the drawing-room, just as our friend had put on his most captivating smile, and arranged something pleasant to say to both of the ladies, in he went in the head-foremost sort of style that a clown tumbles on to the stage, completely putting to flight smile, simper, sentiment, all he had got to say.

A trifle of this sort would be nothing to most men, but to a man like our hero, who went so much on appearances, it was sadly vexatious. He knew there was nothing made a man look so ridiculous as a descent of this kind, and there was nothing he dreaded so much as looking ridiculous, especially before *her*. It was therefore some minutes ere he got his nerves composed and his ideas sufficiently restored to their former order, so as to start from the place where he had left mother and daughter, viz., the railway station at Roseberry Rocks. Having done ample justice to the charms of that beautiful place—the Rocks we mean, not the station—Mr. Bunting next drew a few mutual acquaintances casually before them, and despite Mrs. McDermott's efforts (who had a *présentiment* of what was coming) to turn the conversation, at length asked in a careless sort of way, if they had seen anything of their fat friend young Mr. Goldfinch since they left.

"Gold-*spink*," replied Mrs. McDermott, with an emphasis on the "spink." "Goldspink—oh, yes, we see him occasionally," said she; "he lives near here, you know."

"Oh, does he?" replied Mr. Bunting, as though he had no idea of anything of the sort.

Mrs. McDermott here gave the bell-handle a turn, which John Thomas answered by bringing a silver tray with seed cake and some capital sherry; for the late Mr. McDermott was a great connoisseur, and had left her an excellent stock; which, however, Mr. Bunting declining, the conversation again resumed its former current of inquiry and recital: what they had been doing since they parted; where they had been, where they were going; and though Miss told of her hunt with the Duke of Tergiversation's hounds, she said nothing of Lord Marchhare, or of his lordship's decoration of her pony's head with the fox's brush.

They then talked about hunting generally, Mr. Jessop's hounds, the Duke of Tergiversation's hounds, Mr. Jonathan Jobling's harriers; and Mr. Bunting expressed his astonishment at meeting Miss Rosa the day before. Shouldn't have known her if it hadn't been for her

hat, never having seen her on horseback before, or with her hair in ringlets.

Then Mamma took up the running, and asked Mr. Bunting how he liked Rosa in ringlets; and though our hero was too good a judge to say anything decidedly against them, yet both Mamma and Miss saw that he preferred her hair plain. And the discussion reminded them of the interview in Seaview Place, when our other hero Jasper, first saw Rosa with her hair plain; and an inward something whispered to them both, "What if the whole thing should ultimately turn upon the question of Plain or Ringlets?" Less important points have decided these momentous matrimonial matters.

And after a prolonged sit, during the whole of which Mrs. McDermott pertinaciously remained in the room, as the shades of evening began to draw on, Mr. Bunting at length asked leave to ring for his horses; and Mamma, having paved the way for another visit, an arrangement that Miss certified with a sweet smile and a shake of her ungloved hand, he at length backed himself out of the presence, taking care of the step as he left.

The last cough of the groom's horse having died out on the cold evening air, Mamma and Miss resolved themselves into a committee to consider the whole matter. The pros and cons we are not at liberty to publish, but the debate lasted long after Mr. Bunting had coughed his way back to his uncomfortable quarters at Burton St. Leger.

CHAPTER LXXII.

HASSOCKS HEATH HILL.

When Mr. Jovey Jessop heard of Mr. Bunting's misfortune with his horses, he pitied him exceedingly, for thinking of nothing but hunting himself, it never occurred to him that a man could come into the country for anything else. It was such a thing for Mr. Bunting he said, to lose the best of the season, all through a damp stable, and though rather short of horses himself, Jovey determined to see if he could not give him a mount. So he took the Jug a stroll round the stables after breakfast, and upon hearing the report of Mr. Rowel the groom, how Lapwing was lame, and Lady Jane off her feed, and the Squirrel not fit to go, Mr. Jessop finally fixed that the Bold Pioneer should have the honour of carrying the distinguished stranger. That point settled, Jovey presently put the Jug into the dog-cart and drove him rapidly over to Burton St. Leger. Arrived there he left him to enjoy the society of sore-eyed Sam at the Lord Cornwallis Inn door, and followed his card upstairs into Mr. Bunting's apartment.

After a few common places about the weather, the roads, and the state of the country—the hunting, not the political state—Jovey broached the subject of our hero's horses, which he was sorry to hear had caught cold on the road, and concluded by saying, that he would be glad if Mr. Bunting would allow him to send one to Hassocks Heath Hill, which, he said, was one of their best meets, and where, he thought, they would find a wild fox, and he concluded the overture by saying that he hoped Mr. Bunting would dine and stay all night at Appleford Hall after hunting. To an out-and-out sportsman, nothing could be handsomer or more inviting, and though a less vigorous programme would have suited our friend quite as well, he could not say "nay" to the offer.

So it was settled that there should be a horse at Hassocks Heath Hill, and our master of hounds declining our hero's offer of refreshment (though the Jug had a glass of whiskey) presently took his departure, and jumping into his dog-cart, drove rapidly away with the Jug, to the surprise of sore-eyed Sam, who had not time to enquire who was to pay for the "glass." Hassocks Heath was a popular meet as well for Mr. Jessop's hounds as the Duke of Tergiversation's men, to whose country it more properly belonged; but the Duke not caring to go long distances from home, had arranged to let Jovey Jessop draw all his out-lying covers on condition that he came whenever he required him, which enabled his Grace to talk of Mr. Jessop as a sort of appendage to the Castle—sometimes even going the length of saying that Jovey's hounds were his Grace's, only he didn't like to be thought so desperately keen as to keep two packs.

That style of thing, however, only does for the wholly uninitiated, for of all the undesirable false pretences that men can indulge in, there is none so self-punishing as that of pretending to like hunting when they don't. The parties impose upon no one but themselves.

The Prince Pirouetteza, however, was just the sort of person with whom to turn Mr. Jessop to account, and though His Highness had got far more bumping than he liked on the Holly Bush Inn day, and would much have preferred staying at home singing and playing his guitar to the ladies, yet the Duke was peremptory in his commands for him to go and see his "other hounds" at Hassocks Heath. "Must go and see my other hounds at Hassocks Heath." So hunters were ordered, carriage horses were ordered, breakfast was ordered, at twenty minutes past eight *to a minute*, and the Duke having given all these orders and impressed the importance of punctuality on every one, went to bed at his wonted hour, and never thought more of the matter. What was the use of giving Jessop the covers if he didn't get something from him in return, thought he. Besides, the great star should never appear upon the stage till the proper time of the evening. Nothing like making people wait for giving them a due sense of one's importance, thought the Duke. Mr. Jessop on the other hand, was punctuality itself. Ten-

thirty, to a minute was his hour, and as sure as people's watches got to within five minutes of that time, Mr. Jessop's hat would be seen bobbing above the neighbouring hedges, or the dog-cart, with the Jug and himself jolting to cover together, would be heard grinding and scattering the newly-laid stones on the converging road. Mr. Jessop wishing to keep his Jug as much for his own domestic purposes as possible, and not approving either of the glassings of public houses, or the hospitalities of private ones, always made his meets at out-of-the-way places, milestones, finger-posts, stone pits, bridges, &c., places where there was little or no chance of getting drink.

Thus he kept his Jug empty for the evening. Neither did Mr. Jessop encourage the attendance of the fair. Though a highly gallant gentleman when in his black pantaloons, he always declared that he never wished to see ladies out with his hounds. That hunting was dangerous enough for the men, and the ladies looked far better in their drawing-rooms, with nicely done-up fires waiting for the coming home of the gentlemen in the evening, than tearing across country with their hair over their shoulders, and their faces running down with perspiration. And though the cat-faced Miss Sowerbys did sneer and turn up their pug noses at the idea of anybody marrying "a mere fox-hunter," yet as Mr. Jessop was fresh and good-looking, there were plenty of young ladies who would be glad to relieve the old Jug from his arduous office of Comptroller of the hospitalities of Appleton Hall.

Now, for our particular fox-hunting meet. Hassocks Heath, unlike some heaths which grow corn, grass, tares, turnips, anything but heather, is still a heath; wild, spacious, sporting and wet. On parts of it a man can career as if on a race-course, while in others he may blob up to his horse's tail in a bog. It seems to be a sort of sanctuary for game: foxes use its straggling gorses, the black-faced sheep seem almost as wild as the foxes, hares and rabbits scuttle among its browning fern, and ripening ling: snipes haunt its rushy rills, partridges bask on its sunny slopes, while the *co-beck, co-beck, co-beck*, of the startled grouse, gives a finished wildness to the whole. There is nothing Leadenhallish or £ s. d.-ish about Hassocks Heath. It would not do for Mr. Jessop if there was. The very road is spacious and open at the sides, leaving a traveller the choice of divergence as he prefers hard or soft. The land rises and falls in wavy sinuous hills, whose gentle dips and bends only reveal other hills beyond. Such were the general features of the dun and purple moors of Hassocks Heath—a favourite meet of Mr. Jessop's hounds.

If the man who plants a tree is entitled to be considered a public benefactor, assuredly the man who planted the clump on the rising ground in the middle of Hassocks Heath ought to be red-lettered in the almanac as a patriot, for it serves as a landmark to all the country round, to tinkers, muggers, pic-nick-ers, fox-hunters, shooters, farmers,

and wayfarers of all sorts. The Hill at Hassocks Heath, is the site of a lamb, a sheep, a cow, and a horse-fair—a sort of central *rendezvous* from all parts; and though certain white-headed frieze-coated farmers, can "mind" when the Scotch firs were more numerous, none of them can ever remember the trees being any smaller. There they stand, at wide intervals, on the gravelly hill with plenty of room for their stag-headed tops to spread and afford shelter alike from the scorching sun, and the driving storm. The well trodden dun-coloured grass around shows by the pole and peg-holes, the clippings of tin, the shaving of sticks, and the ashes of fires, the varied purposes to which the place is applied. Now it is going to be used as the opening scene in the great British drama called the fox-hunt—in which every man can take a part without note or invitation. First to arrive on this auspicious day were a group of pedestrians; Jacky Bray, the gigantic quoit-playing blacksmith of Lockerby Ford, who has walked fifteen miles; Tom Cooper the gentleman, in a cat-skin cap, with blue glass buttons on a faded red-plush vest, who lives nobody exactly knows how, but whose bulging calves show little symptoms of want; Nat Skittles the pedestrian whistler, who can do anything but work; Jim Savage the horsebreaker, who is only half broke himself: Ned Willowford the travelling basket-maker of anywhere, and two or three smock-frocked shepherds and countrymen, who have each forfeited a day's work to be present. Their beaming faces, however, show they expect plenty of fun for their money. If they do but see the Squire's dogs find, they'll be quite content.

"Aye, they are good dogs" they say, and so they out with their pipes, and squat on the gravelly ground to enjoy a smoke, discuss their merits—eulogising such hounds as they have the pleasure of knowing by sight. The next change in the scene, is the arrival of the horses, mostly fine handsome well-conditioned animals who know as well what they are going to do as the grooms who bestride them. Most of these men are got up for the occasion, smart ties, smart coats, smart boots, smart every thing—for there are gentlemen who would rather not hunt at all than not turn out in other than what they consider tip-top style. This, of course, varies with the taste of each master, so here we have laced hats, plain hats, cockaded hats, light coats, dark coats, chesnut tops, red tops, pink tops, and nearly black tops. There is as much affectation about tops as there is about pipes, each man thinking to have his pipe or his tops blacker than his neighbours.

The difference between a show and a sporting pack now begins to be apparent, the horses and servants of the men of the Duke's hunt contrasting badly with the neat quiet equipments of those belonging to Mr. Jessop's. The finely-shaped flea-bitten grey horse and the bright bay, in charge of the knowing-looking little fellow in the black frock-coat, striped vest, and Bedford cords, are our master's own, his first and second horses, for he hunts the hounds himself, and always

has two out. The diminutive genius in charge of them may be any age, any age at least, save young, for he was no boy when Mr. Jessop took him, and he has been with him many years. His name is Mark; he most likely has another, but it has long been lost from disuse, at least nobody would know him if he was called by it—while as "Mark" he is everybody's acquaintance; follow "Mark," is the order to all the second horsemen. "Where's Mark!" is the cry when the hounds come to check, "let Mark have a run at it!" is the proposal when the leap is larger than people like, and they want it reduced. Nature meant Mark for a horseman, and it was lucky he hit upon hunting, or he might have been silk instead of scarlet, fluttering on a race-course instead of careering across country.

The slouching-looking clown following Mark, in the unbrushed hat, shaggy head, careless tie, and drab coat turned up with grease, riding the iron-marked chestnut with the white face and legs, is the Jug's lad, Button, whose Christian name being Tom, of course they call him "Billy" and the led horse; a grand-looking grey—is the Bold Pioneer, one of our master's own horses, now for Mr. Bunting's riding. Whatever Mr. Jessop did, he always did well, a mount being a mount with him, and not an animal that could only go a few fields.

Scarcely has Mark brushed away the mud-specks, and rectified the little derangements of the road, greeted his acquaintance, and made a general survey of the scene, ere the hounds heave in sight, lobbing along in long-drawn file on either side of the road, in the careless indifferent sort of way fox-hounds travel to cover. There are only a couple of scarlet coated men with them, Horneyman the first whip, who would be huntsman if his master ever gave him a chance by being away, and "Michael," who, like Mark, most likely has some other name, if one did but know it.

Horneyman is a slight, slim, middle-aged man, while Michael is a little, short-legged, roundabout fellow, who sits like a sack, and looks as though he might be rolled about any where without hurting. And many rolls, and bumps, and thumps he gets in the course of the season, for he has no notion of turning, and has many a rough line to fight for himself. Lord Marchbare has been known to make a special expedition into the vale for the sole purpose of having a cram across country with Mr. Jessop's men, old Halth and Contantment never indulging his lordship's taste that way.

The gay cavalcade approaches, and now a gentle rate from Horneyman stops old Gidan, who as usual is well in advance of the pack, and all at once the head recedes, the tail advances, and twenty couple of great lashing fox-hounds arrive in a solid mass instead of in the loose straggling lines in which they had been travelling. Gladsome now throws his tongue joyfully as if to announce their arrival, and Chorister takes up the note with redoubled vigour.

"Ge-n-tly, old Noisy," says Horneyman, with a smile and a shake

of his head, and Chorister, knowing the reproof is all moonshine, makes another proclamation, louder, if possible, than before.

Horneyman then, turning off the road, takes up a position on the deserted Aunt Sally ground, a little on the left of the hill, where on the comfortable flat the hounds have ample space to roll and refresh themselves. The foot people now gather round criticising and identifying their favourites, and making the acquaintance of those they had not seen before. Horneyman then looks at his watch, and giving the exact time,—twenty minutes past ten,—a general drawing out of watches ensues, whose time is as various as their make, the Lockerby blacksmith's hour being noon, Cooper, the gentleman with the calves, eleven, Skittle's ten, Willowford's nine, and Savage's a little after seven. The shepherds and countrymen who go by the sun expressing their opinion that Horneyman's watch will be right, the rest set theirs by it, and fresh reinforcements of horse and foot arriving, a large ring is now formed, hounds, Horneyman, and Michael inside, foot people in front, grooms and second horsemen hovering around.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE UNION HUNT.

THE first person or thing to arrive anywhere is sure to attract more attention and to make a greater impression on the bystanders than any who come after. The first lady at a ball, the first soldier at a review, the first horse on a race-course, the first carriage at a drawing-room, all stamp themselves upon the mind, and become prominent features of the whole. The rustling pink moire antique, with its lace and flowers, as it descends from the carriage, under the guidance of both fair hands, seems richer and finer than any of the silks or satins or moire antiques that follow, so the first soldier who trots into Hyde Park is regarded as a hero, and the first carriage that rolls down St. James's Street is sure to hold a beauty—though she may be all feathers and flowers.

The first real great man to arrive at Hassocks Heath Hill on this occasion was one that ordinary individuals would call the Duke of Tergiversation's stud-groom, but whom the Duke himself dignified by the title of his Master of the Horse. This was Mr. Hawkins—

MR. HAWKINS,

MASTER OF THE HORSE,

he put upon his cards, a stout, solemn-looking, grey-whiskered, grey-headed man—we beg pardon, gentleman—in scarlet, leathers, and cap, who the servants called "Sir," and touched their hats to. If Mr. Hawkins had only had a few decent horses to be master of, he would

have filled the office remarkably well, as it was he was very weak in the department over which he professed to preside. That, however, was more the Duke's fault than his, his Grace having no notion of the division of labour and insisting upon Hawkins's horses doing everything—hunting, hacking, outriding, leather-plateing—anything—even going to the Post if required. Then, as his Grace was not in great repute as a paymaster, the farmers did not press their produce upon him, and Hawkins was often obliged to put up with only indifferent forage. He now comes to cover at the head of half-a-dozen screws which would be much better condensed into three. There are two for the Duke, two for the Earl, and two for the Prince, our old white friend with the triumphant ends, Timour the Tartar, as he is called, being one of the two for the latter It is to be hoped that their numbers impose upon somebody, and tend to keep up what the Duke calls his po-o-sition in the county.

The first real accredited sportsman to arrive is our old friend Mr. Archey Ellenger, who has lain all night at farmer Hobday's, at Dumbleton, and Hobday having had to breakfast early in order to attend Mayfield market, has caused Archey to turn out earlier than he liked. His old rusty red coat and cords contrast badly with Mr. Hawkins's smart scarlet and leathers, and Hawkins returns Archey's familiar "good morning" with a sort of salute that as good as says, "I don't know whether I'll touch my cap to you or not." Horneyman and Michael merely move theirs a little, as though they were not quite comfortable on their heads. Meanwhile the plot thickens and there is presently a great muster of horsemen, gentlemen in black coats, gentlemen in green coats, gentlemen in grey coats, gentlemen in pea-jackets, gentlemen in over-coats, and in every variety of legging. At length the red coats begin to arrive, those on cantering hacks showing their grandeur openly, those on wheels covering themselves up with warm wraps and rugs,—the yellow collars of the Duke's men distinguishing them from the plain reds of Mr. Jessop's hunt. Of the former we have several of our old shooting acquaintance, the Duke having expressed a wish that as many of his friends should attend as possible. Our old friend, Captain Cambo, has invested his fat person in a very tightly-fitting old dress red with the yellow silk lining taken out, very fragile-looking white cords, and Rhinoceros-hide-like Napoleon boots. Then there is Tonguey Thomson, as noisy as ever, in a bran new yellow collared red coat, but a very seedy brown cap, also Mr. Daintry, both Brown, and Black White, George Wheeler —the crack man of the Duke's hunt, who can beat everybody—also Captain Ambrose Lightfoot, on leave of absence from Freeland's Lawn, Mr. Woodross, Mr. Young, Colonel Nettlestead, Mr. Leyland Langford, and several others all bent on distinguishing themselves in some way or other.

Punctual to the minute, up drove Mr. Jovey Jessop, with his Jug,

the red hot boots of the latter corresponding with his own rubicund face, and after a standing up stare in the vehicle, to see if Mr. Bunting was come, Mr. Jessop chucked off his poncho and stood out the sportsman. Then there was the usual hailing and welcoming, and where-are-you-from-ing? and how's old so and so? and have you seen Smith? and does anybody know anything about Mr. Bunting? Then somebody had seen a stranger on a bay coming very slowly, and Mr. Jessop wished Mr. Bunting mightn't have mistaken the hour, thinking they met at eleven instead of half-past ten; and after consuming some ten minutes in unprofitable talk, he at length hollowed out to Mark, "Well, give me my horse; and you," addressing the Jug's lad, "stay here till Mr. Bunting comes, and then show him the way to the cover."

"Horse!" exclaimed Mr. Archey Ellenger, "horse! why, don't you know the Duke's coming?"

"Ah, true, I forgot," replied our now somewhat crest-fallen master, wincing at the persecution he felt he would have to undergo. "Well," said he, flopping his broad chest with his arms, and stamping to get his feet warm, "I suppose we must wait. It will give Mr. Bunting a chance too, so let's have a run up the hill and see if we can see anything of them." So saying our master started up hill like a stag, followed by several dismounted equestrians, who all found running in boots was not quite so easy as running in shoes.

There was no Duke visible, but Mr. Bunting was coughing his way on the Exquisite in a most uncompromising manner.

"By Jove, what a cough that horse has got!" muttered Mr. Jessop, thinking he would not like to ride him. He then ran down the other side of the hill, and greeted our hero with a hearty shake of the hand.

"I'm sorry your horse doesn't mend of his cold," observed Mr. Jessop, thinking, as he now looked at him, that it would be very odd if he did.

"Why, no, he doesn't," replied Mr. Bunting, still unwilling to admit that he had been imposed upon.

"Well, you've got here, at all events," observed our master; adding, "and I've brought you a horse that can go—ride him just as you like, you know. If you want to go first, you'll follow my whip—if you want to go safe, you'll follow my friend, Mr. Boyston, who knows every gate and gap in the country. By the way," continued he, "let me introduce you to my friend Mr. Boyston," leading Mr. Bunting onward to where the Jug still sat slouching and smoking in the dog-cart.

"Boyston!" cried Mr. Jessop, "Boyston! Let me introduce Mr. Bunting. Mr. Bunting, Mr. Boyston; Mr. Boyston, Mr. Bunting." Whereupon Mr. Boyston showed Mr. Bunting his bristly black head, and Mr. Bunting returned the compliment by uncovering his well tended curls. The acquaintance was then perfected. "I've been telling Mr. Bunting," continued Jovey, addressing the Jug, "that you can pilot him safely if he's inclined to put himself under your care."

"No man safer!" exclaimed Archy Ellenger, who always liked to throw in his word—adding aside, "and run him to ground in somebody's kitchen"—the Jug and Archy sometimes clashing in their predatory exploits.

Mr. Jessop now looked at his watch, and finding it was above half an hour after time, a most unusual circumstance with him, exclaimed at the top of his voice, "Does anybody know that the Duke of Tergiversation is coming? I say, you sir!" addressing the pompous-looking yellow-collared stud groom, "Do you know that the Duke of Tergiversation is coming?"

"Yes, sir, his Grace *is* coming," replied Mr. Hawkins confidently; "also the Earl of Marchhare, and His Royal Highness the Imperial Prince Pirouetteza. These horses are for them," added he, putting his own a little forward, as if to astonish our master with the number and importance of the establishment.

"A bonny lot they are," sneered Mr. Archey Ellenger, sufficiently loud for Mr. Hawkins to hear; an observation that was duly reported to Mr. Cucumber, and entered on the chronicles of the castle. Archey's chance of a dinner there then became extremely small.

Ten minutes more elapsed, and as the most patient of even the Duke's men were beginning to wax weary, and to ask Mr. Jessop how long he would wait, the glad word "coming" was heard, which speeding from mouth to mouth, put a little animation into the party, and caused them to make preparations for a start.

They were, however, somewhat premature in their movements, for the Duke, treating Mr. Jessop's hounds quite as his own, after the usual lofty salutations were over, his Grace called to Mr. Jessop to bring the hounds up to the carriage for the Prince to inspect. And the Duke's covers being good, and of great use to Mr. Jessop, he had no alternative but to submit with as good a grace as he could, and hear the Duke and the Prince pass their opinion upon them. They asked the name of this hound and of that, their dams and their sires, talked of their colour, their size, and their general appearance. "Pretty tails," said the Prince, "tipped with pink." At length the Prince, thinking to say something agreeable to his Grace, observed "Dat dey ver not quite all so much of von same size as de oders," pointing to Ginger and Viper in confirmation of what he said. Whereupon Mr. Jessop, unable any longer to restrain himself, exclaimed, "Why, dash it, man, those are the terriers!" and immediately recollecting himself, with a slight whistle and a wave of the arm he got the hounds away from the carriage, and making his way to his horse jerked his head to the Duke's stud-groom as a hint for him to advance with his Grace's. Getting them mounted, however, was easier said than done, for upon the gallant war-horse being again presented to the Prince, His Highness declared emphatically he would not have him—He vod no more Timour de Tartars—dat he had bomped him till he

vas sores. And though Mr. Hawkins tried to cajole him that he was only to ride him the first part of the run, the Prince absolutely refused to have anything more to do with de Tartar; exclaiming, "No, no, get me anoder horse! get me anoder horse!" So Hawkins was obliged to substitute Rob Roy, who had rather a critical leg, and required careful riding, which he was not very likely to get at the hands of the Prince.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

BRUSHWOOD BANK.

At length they all get mounted to their liking, Prince, Earl, Duke and all, and his Grace having followed up his pretended supremacy by telling Mr. Jessop to draw Brushwood Bank first (which Jovey always did) the cavalcade was formed, hounds leading, the field following in long-drawn file, with a strongish inclination of sportsmen towards the Prince. That great man was as affable as usual, asking a variety of sensible questions, and hoping they would exterminate those diabolical foxes, and so give de chickens peace and repose. He seemed to consider it a monstrous grievance that they should be fed upon fowls. Tonguey Thomson supported His Highness' view, and gave a variety of instances of Reynard's extravagant housekeeping, such as killing a whole brood of turkeys at once, and helping himself to the earliest lambs, all of which the Prince thought very improper, but could not for the life of him understand why it was necessary to keep so many dogs to kill him—"Vot for dey didn't get de gon?"

Our hero, Mr. Bunting, now mounted on the light-mouthed springey high-conditioned Pioneer — so different to the weak flobby animal he had come on, was beset by our friend Mr. Archey Ellenger, who was delighted to find Mr. Bunting had come into the country to hunt, and hoped he would give him the pleasure of his company to dinner—Friday, Saturday, Sunday, any day he liked. All were alike to Archey, Mr. Bunting would always find fish, joint, and a pudding at six, and a bottle of Cutler and Ferguson's best. And though Mr. Bunting did not think that Mr. Ellenger looked a likely man to have a very capital *ménage*; yet, knowing it was not always safe to judge from appearances, after a good deal of pressing he agreed to accept Archey's hospitality on the Sunday. And, this preliminary arranged, Archey presently scuttled away looking about for some body to meet him.

Brushwood Bank stands well in the heath, far from human habitation or trespass, the cover being formed in a sort of copse wood oval scoop, stretching half-way up the south side of Thorneyburn Hill, to which

our master was now approaching. Whichever way a fox goes, he must be viewed by the whole field, a great recommendation to wavering sportsmen—who like to know what they are riding at. Though Mr. Jessop was constantly drawing it, and almost as constantly killing his fox from it, yet such was its attractions that it was seldom or ever without one. The hounds now approached it in a lively sort-of-way as if they knew they would find him. Having been detained long enough at the meet, Mr. Jessop was not going to give his Grace a second chance by halting at the cover side, so trotting up to the accustomed corner, he gave the glad pack their liberty, and in they went with an impetus that made the old bushes crackle and bend.

"What does he mean by throwing off before we came up!" exclaimed the Duke to Mr. Hawkins, who was now riding respectfully a little behind his Grace.

"Don't know your Grace," replied Mr. Hawkins touching his cap, adding, "shall I ride forward and see;" but before his Grace could give his commands, a loud sonorous voice was heard exclaiming, "Now, gentlemen, follow me, and don't make a row!"

It was the voice of the Jug, who was comptroller of the field as well as of the household, and in the execution of his duty was now endeavouring to muster the field in one spot, but it being composed of more unruly elements than usual, the Jug had to repeat his exhortation several times, and even to summons some of the delinquents by name ere he could get them to comply with his request. Meanwhile the glad pack has scattered, each taking the line he thinks most likely to lead up his game. Rummager, Speedwell, and Valiant push on to where they found him last time without troubling to try the intermediate places.

One crack of Mr. Jessop's whip stops their career, and startles old Reynard, who is reposing in a most comfortable reedy grass couch, under the stump of an old tree. Rising up and giving himself a shake, he listens attentively to the echoing voice, and satisfying himself that the cheer he now hears, is the same sound that indicated mischief before, he steps deliberately out of his lair, and looking a-head seeing the coast is clear, resolves to vacate by the line that served him before. So he deliberately passes down the hill, and getting upon the old wood track crouches along the overhanging bushes till he comes to the widening exit place, which, being clear, he dashes boldly out with a whisk of his well-tagged brush, that as good as says, "Now Jovey my boy, catch me if you can."

Horneyman who is perched up aloft in a thicket, has his cap in the air, the instant the fox appears, and as the assembled field get a view, such a discordant roar arises as would scare a lion from his prey. The Jug's meeting is forthwith dissolved.

"He's away for Haselwood Banks," cries farmer Jackman hauling his great hairy-heeled horse round the reverse way to what the fox is going.

"I'll lay a guinea he goes to Castleford Gorse," exclaims Captain Cambo, spurring and hustling his half-fed screw along as though he were the best horse in the field.

Then there is such a looking out for leaders, and such enquiries as to who knows the way over Elvington bog. Meanwhile Mr. Jessop, Horneyman, with George Wheeler at his heels, Lord Marchhare, with Mr. Black White in attendance on him, have slipped quietly away, and as Michael emerges from the cover with the last of the tail hounds, the line of gallop is formed, and a great amount of daring energy is ready for action so long as there is no leaping.

The old steady Jug, thinking more than he talked, recognised the fox by his full brush and light fur, and seeing the wind was in the same art as when he beat them before, tells our hero he will "ride him right," and the Jug being a well-known safe pilot, several others, Archey Ellenger among the number, sought his convoy, and he went bucketing away with a very respectable miscellaneous coloured tail. Though the pace was tremendous, the Jug thought it wouldn't last after they got off the heath, so he went grinning, and hugging, and saving his horse with his great shoulders up to his ears, dreading every minute to be down in a rut or a stone-hole—or up to the tail in a moss-hag.

Meanwhile Mr. Hawkins affects to lead the Duke's division, and the Prince goes tearing along, pulling Rob Roy nearly double, his Highness grinding his teeth, and declaring he "vos von deuced deal vorse dan de oder." Mr. Hawkins, seeing his misery, recommends him to ease the horse's head a little, which the Prince doing, Rob Roy most ungenerously ran away with him, to the great danger as well of the Prince's neck as of the horse's own critical leg. Luckily the ground was not only favourable but upon the rise, and the Prince, after charging a flock of goats gallantly, and astonishing a cabin full of gipseys, at length succeeded in subduing him. The Duke with his tail coming up politely pretended to think the Prince was doing it on purpose.

Horsforth Hill now appears full before the various groups of approaching sportsmen, dividing the heath from the vale, and forming the natural boundary between the Duke of Tergiversation's country and Jessop's. The hounds were over the hill before the Jug rounded the little green valley, which brought his detachment within sight of it, and the last of the first flight men were striving, and casing, and hugging their horses up it, saving them as much as they could for the evidently coming struggle in the vale below. The Jug follows their example, and on reaching the bottom he rises in his stirrups, and holding on by the chesnut horse's mane, exhibits himself in anything but an elegant attitude. His followers, however, all do the same, so none can laugh at the other; luckily for them, there is no artist out to draw them for *Punch*, or anything else. So they toil, and

strive, and spread-eagle themselves, each according to his own peculiar ideas of equestrian easement, just as ladies lean forward in a carriage going up hill, thinking they are doing a great deal towards expediting matters.

The summit gained, the Duke's diminished party, who have risen the hill on the slope at the low end, came tearing along the top, the Prince grinning, and gaping, and steaming, and looking as if he were most thoroughly sick of the whole performance. Nor is the change of scene at all likely to conduce to his happiness, for the hounds are now racing away over the large grass enclosures below the hill, bearing right away for the heart of the vale, Mr. Jessop lying well with them, followed closely by Lord Marchhare, while George Wheeler sticks to Horneyman like a burr, followed by Black White, all of them sitting in that determined sort of way that says, Now we are in for a stinger. The country gets flatter and flatter, and it is only those who are in the same field with the now almost mute running pack that really know where the hounds are. The tail of the first flight are riding at hats and caps and horses' heads, hoping for a speedy change of the scene. The hill as usual affords a favourable place for many to pull up and take a bird's-eye view of as much of the rest of the run as they can, and many indifferently mounted dark coats gladly follow the example set by Captain Cambo's scarlet.

"Vot von vare grand (puff) prospect!" exclaimed the perspiring Prince, pulling up as if lost in admiration of the scene—the rich green water meandering vale, the dark clumps, the spire, the distant hills beyond.

"Oh, come along!" cried the Duke, adding, "we shall have some fun now that we have got into the vale," his Grace eyeing Black White's meritorious exertions to distinguish himself, and thinking B. W. wasn't such a bad fellow after all.

"Oh, tank you, sare Duke, bot I am bomped enof!" gasped the exhausted Prince, holding Rob Roy hard by the head.

"Would your Highness like your other horse?" now asks Mr. Hawkins, riding up cap in hand, thinking the Prince would get through the critical leg.

"No, no," retorted the Prince peevishly, "I have had foxing enof —I have had Timour de Tartaring enof—let me go ome to my music."

His Highness being resolute, there was no help for it, and a very little hesitation at the pace these hounds are going putting a very great gulph between them and their pusillanimous followers, the Duke now thinks it is of no use trying to catch them up, and resolves to save further risk, under plea of politeness to the Prince. Meanwhile, the flying pack press on in close array, and gradually appear no bigger than marbles. The fences, too, as surveyed from above, seem so trifling, that the only wonder is people don't all charge them abreast.

The farther the horsemen get into the vale, the more formidable the fences become, until large water-cuts accompany them on either side, requiring skill and strength to get over. The slime and water-mark in the ditches show the marks of the recent flood, and prepare the mind for the probable treat of the river. They are now on the banks of the Lune, with its smoothly gliding water running even with its sides. First up is Mr. Jessop, followed closely by Horneyman and Michael, one side of the latter, together with that of his horse, being now encased in a complete plaster of mud, as if Michael had been taking an equestrian cast of himself.

"Been down?" asks Mr. Jessop, as he gets a glimpse of his disfigured servant.

"Yes, sir," replies Michael, with a touch of his cap, "Mr. Black White crossed me at my leap, and knocked me right over—got in himself too," added Michael, with a grin.

"Sarve him right!" replied Mr. Jessop, putting his horse at a stiff flight of rails, where he expected to find a gap, but which had been recently made up, and getting well over. Lord Marchhare follows gallantly, but his horse making an awkward rap, a friendly place is quickly found in the hedge, of which the rest avail themselves. Still there is the river to be negotiated, as they say in the city. Of all the impediments to progress, there is none so impervious to friendship. Water is a case in which no man can do anything for another. The only real kindness he can show him is not to break the banks, so as to make matters worse for the last comer than it was for the first. A wall, however high, is generally lowered until a donkey might step over it, while a hedge is often laid as flat as a pancake, but water, unaccommodating water, flows on in a cardless sort of way, that as good as says, You may take me or leave, but you'll get me for nothing less than you see me.

Our fox, either emboldened by repeated escapes or finding the river fuller than he liked, had evidently hesitated about crossing, and after running the green pastures for three quarters of a mile, took a bold swing to the right, and, passing up Acorn Hill, made across the large enclosures on the high side of the wood. Here, however, he was headed. Farmer Strongstubble was out coursing, and it was with great difficulty that his yellow dog Duster was restrained from running into him. As it was, Duster drove the fox so completely off his point, that when the hounds came up they overran the scent, and came to a check at the end of five-and-twenty minutes from the finding. Mr. Jessop saw at a glance what had happened, and, reining in his horse, sat transfixed in his saddle, while the hounds spread like a rocket and made their own cast. The check was lucky, for it enabled Mark to drop as it were from the clouds with our master's second horse, who, whipping his horn out of its case, was off one and on to the other in the twinkling of an eye.

"*Into the wood by the gate!*" now cries Mr. Strongstubble, waving his arm in that direction; and at a single *whoop* from our master the hounds rush to the spot to where he has now turned his horse's head, and, catching the scent, go in with a cry that makes the cover echo, scaring out hares, pigeons, and pheasants, as though they thought the place was on fire.

"Where have you brought him from?" asks Humbolt the miller, hurrying up to Horneyman, as the latter opens the gate into the wood.

"Brushwood Banks!" cries Horneyman, as he now passes through the gate after his master.

The fox has passed straight through the wood, and dashes out into the green field below, just as the now red-hot Jug rides his detachment to the point at the low end of the cover. The Jug views him, and stopping his horse, holds up his hand as a signal to those behind to do the same. Out then pour the bristling pack, and Mr. Jessop, being now on a fresh horse, breaks the wood-fence for his followers. Away they all strive up the rich alluvial soil of the valley in much the same form as before. The Jug's party join on, and there are still some twenty horsemen in all. The number, however, is now about to be reduced. Mr. Ravenhill's keeper is out shooting, and meeting the fox full in the face, decides him to cross the river in hopes of better luck on the other side. So he just drops down the sandy willowy bank, and, after a swim, is presently crawling up and shaking himself on the opposite one. The cry of the hounds is too full to admit of much dandyism, and he trots on, lightening himself of the water as he goes. The hounds turn as short as the fox, and there is presently a rare splashing and scrambling and striving in the water. Out they go on the opposite bank, and Freeman and Resolute proclaiming the line with unmistakeable emphasis, the rest scored to cry and went away as hard as before. Then came the perplexity of the field—the splashing of the hounds cooling the courage of many behind. Mr. Jessop cocked up his legs and went over just where the hounds did, followed by both his whips and Lord Marchhare; but Mr. Black White (who was now nearly all black with his fall) thought there was a better place higher up, and Colonel Nettlestead said the same. So they trotted on to look for it.

"Now Jug!" exclaimed Archey Ellenger, as our safe pilot pulled up, and began to ponder on the bank, "Now Jug, ain't you fond of water?"

"*Humph*," grunted our friend, indignant at being thus called by his nickname in the presence of strangers.

"Let me be at it then" cried George Wheeler, whom Horneyman had somewhat shaken off. Wheeler blobbing in overhead, and nearly parting company with his horse.

"Hurrah for the Duke's best man!" cried Archey Ellenger, as the yellow-collared rider and horse at last scrambled out on the

opposite side, at a place a good deal lower down than where the others had done.

This exhibition damped the ardour of the rest, and made the Jug think with Black White, and Colonel Nettlestead, that there might be a better place higher up. So he too trotted on to look for it.

Meanwhile the hounds went racing on at a pace that spoke unmistakeably of killing.

"We'll do for him to-day, I think!" exclaimed Mr. Jessop to Horneyman, as the latter galloped up to open the gate on to Mr. Collins's example-farm for his master.

"Third time's catching time," replied Horneyman, lifting the latch and throwing wide the gate for his followers.

Mr. Jessop then resumed his place, and went careering away over the swedes, mangolds, and winter tares, well-knowing that Collins would not say anything to his doing so when hounds were running best pace.

They were soon off the "Example farm," and on to another that was only an example of dirtiness, then down Sherwood Banks with a roar, past Salmon's bridge, Crookham corner, and out on to Skyehouse flats, with its wide-extended plain, where a view was obtained, and our game fox fairly run into the open, Mr. Jessop finally holding him up over his head to an undiminished pack, but a very reduced field. However, among the number was the Earl of Marchhare, to whom our master politely presented the brush, expressing the great obligations he was under to the Duke of Tergiversation for allowing him to draw his covers. And after a little time spent in decorating his lordship's horse's head with the brush, and recruiting the hounds, the well satisfied party separated each on his homeward line to disseminate the news of the great run as he went.

When the Prince got home he told Lady Honoria Hopkins that of all sports he had ever seen, he thought the English "hont de fox" was the most ridiculous, and he "vonder'd" that the Duke spent such large monies upon it. So his Grace's purpose was satisfied at any rate, by making the Prince believe that Mr. Jovey Jessop's hounds were his Grace's.

And as hunting notoriously brings us acquainted with many parties, we will now introduce a couple whom the Jug victimised on his way home from the hunt.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE JUG AND HIS LUNCHEON, OR MR. AND MRS. BOWDEROUKINS'S DINNER PARTY.

R. AND MRS. BOWDEROUKINS were honest, equitable, give-and-take folks, who loved society, which, in their opinion, consisted in eating and drinking periodically with their neighbours. Mirth, wit, humour, entered not into their calculations; three courses and a dessert being all they considered necessary. Hence everything was most studiously arranged in the most apple pie order, with, at the same time, a sort of *extempore* air—Bowderoukins often demanding in a loud and audible voice from his end of the table, "WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE, MISTRESS BOWDEROUKINS?" as if he hadn't the slightest idea what it was; while Mrs. Bowderoukins on her part was equally elegant, never knowing until the dish was uncovered.

"Partridges!" Bowdey would exclaim, as the up-turned legs now appeared on the scene.

"*Pardon!*" Mrs. Bowdey would reply; "gwouse, my dear."

"*Hem*—gwouse, are they," Bowdey would rejoin, as if he had never heard of them before, though he very likely had the bill receipted, with the discount taken off for them, in his pocket.

Bowdey, as the country people called him, had been in the linen line; and Mrs. Roukin's father had been in the flannel trade; but all that was forgotten now, save when they plushed or powdered their footman, set up a dinner bell, or committed any other act of saltation against the peace of their longer retired neighbours' pride and dignity. Then the shop was resuscitated, and the invidious question asked, "Who *are* these Bowderoukins's?"

Most people are Dutch-auctioned occasionally—put up at their highest, and run down to their lowest point; so it is of very little use being at the trouble of appraising themselves—the world does it for them, and, generally speaking, not unfairly either. Still, with all the powder and plush, and pulling to pieces, the Bowderoukins's were a nice plummy pair, well matched, and very "comfortable," which latter term may be variously interpreted—some ladies thinking four men-servants to wait upon them, some three, some two, others one, "comfort," or rather the height of happiness.

The Bowderoukins's residence, Rosella Lodge, was a pretty place—pretty even in the eyes of a stranger—beautiful of course in those of an owner. It was in the cottage *ornée* style, with neat lattice windows peeping out of the heather-thatched roof, and a green verandah encircling the whole; the pillars plentifully entwined with roses and flowering shrubs. It stood at the bottom of a little round Hassock's heath-like hill, on whose rock-rugged sides Spruce, Scotch firs, and ferns flourished with healthy vigour, as though they wished no better place. Bowdey had planned the house himself, and if it lacked some of the comforts that a scientific architect would have given it, Bowdey had the satisfaction of knowing that he had saved said architect's fees, and was entitled to the credit of all the commendation that was lavished upon it. In truth, Bowdey had rather sacrificed comfort to appearances, for though the receiving-rooms, library, drawing, and dining-room *en suite*, were good, the bed-rooms at either end of the house were only so so, and liable to the intrusion of beetles, earwigs, and other undesirable insects.

To be such a fat, comfortable-looking man, Mr. Bowderoukins was a desperate fidget, always looking at his watch, always dreading to be late, always fearing people were not going to arrive. On his grand company days he was more than usually fidgetty, wondering why Paul didn't lay the cloth, wondering why Mrs. Empson the cook didn't put down the meat, fearing lest the fish mightn't come, or the tea-cakes be late. He was always a good hour in advance of the day; and instead of running after time, was always hurrying other people up to it. If Bowdey had had to cook the dinner and wait as well, he could not have been in a greater stew; whereas all he had to do was to sit quietly in his easy arm-chair, exclaiming at intervals, "WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE, MISTRESS BOWDEROUKINS?" and so on to the end of the short dialogue appropriated to the piece.

Country hospitality being regulated a good deal by the moon, it so happened that what in the hunting calendar would be called the "Hassocks hill day," had been fixed upon by our friends (if they will allow us to call them so) for the usual quarterly display of plate, linen, and china; and after the usual amount of prevarication, for people can fib in the country almost as well as they can in the towns, a full table full of guests had been engaged to assist at the demolition of a turbot, a Yorkshire pie, a Norfolk turkey hung in Dorking sausages, and other delicacies too numerous to insert in anything but a cookery book, all of which had given our host and hostess an amazing amount of trouble to get and prepare. As the time approached, the excitement became more intense; so much so indeed that, on the day of the great event, Bowderoukins could neither settle to his paper, nor his books, nor yet to that last solace of all—the contemplation of his accounts. He was in and out, backwards and forwards, here, there, and everywhere.

Being a man of pro—o—perty (eighteen acres in a ring-fence), Bowderoukins of course patronised the chase. We don't mean to say that he piled his fat self on a saddle; for, in truth, he was too washbally for riding, but he talked affably about hunting, hoped the redcoats he met had had good sport, said he supposed Mr. Jovey Jessop had a good set of dogs that year, hoped foxes were plentiful, and so on. Now it so happened that, in order to allay the fever of excitement, and perhaps prevent himself committing an assault, he took frequent trots down to the green gate at the end of the little curved drive opening upon the Kelvingdon and Hassocks heath road, and, as luck would have it on the third excursion, just as he was rubbing his nose on his hand as he leant with his arm on the uppermost rail, who should come riding along but the Jug and our hero Mr. Bunting.

"Holloa! Mr. Boyston!" exclaimed Mr. Bowderoukins to old hot boots, "How are you?" opening the gate and going out to greet him as Boyston came up. Then seeing a stranger, Bowdey gave Bunting a full view of his large bald turnip-shaped head, by raising his green-brimmed drab wide-a-wake hat to him.

"Well, and what sport have you had?" asked he, as soon as Mr. Bunting's cap was restored to his head.

"Oh, very good, at least, very fair, middling—that is to say," muttered Boyston, in the indistinct sort of way of a man who has lost the hounds.

"Killed!" asked Bowderoukins, who considered killing the real criterion of sport. In shooting he knew that hitting was everything.

"Yes, no, yes, can't 'zactly tell," replied Boyston; "the fact is, the hounds (cough), the river (hem), the hills (hum)—you couldn't give us a glass of ale, could you?"

"By all means," replied Mr. Bowderoukins; "glass of sherry, too, if you like, and a biscuit."

"Oh no!" exclaimed the Jug, "just a glass of ale—wouldn't touch a drop of wine in a morning if it was ever so."

"Well, but p'raps your friend will," replied the hospitable Mr. Bowderoukins, looking at Mr. Bunting as he now opened the green gate for them to enter.

They then passed through, and, leaving the gate to swing to at its leisure, proceeded up the slightly ascending drive, Mr. Bowderoukins waddling and puffing and blowing in the uncomfortable sort of way of a pursy little gentleman trying to keep up a conversation with people on horseback.

"Gwacious goodness, who's here!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, who was superintending the removal of the drugget from the dining-room carpet, as the last turn of the road brought the guests in full view of the house, and of course the house in full view of the guests. "Goodness gwacious! I do believe it's the Jug—the Jug and a stranger! Whatever *can* Mr. Bowderoukins mean by bringing these people here on such a day as this."

"Oh dear! oh dear! I'd rather see anybody than that great red-faced man." The latter exclamation proceeded from one of the crimson curtains of the ground-reaching windows of the dining-room, where Maria the parlour-maid was busy distributing and pyramiding the napkins to the fourteen chairs for the fourteen guests, who were expected to partake of Rosella Lodge hospitality.

We need not say Mrs. Roukins was desperately alarmed, for, independently of not being in company-trim, having on an old stained blue and soot-coloured silk dress, with a very ordinary collar, she well knew that very little interruption at this time of day would throw the whole establishment out of gearing, and make it as useless as an engine run off a railway. But if she was not in apple-pie order, the drawing-room was—carpet uncovered, mirror unmuslined, and all the infatuated worsted-work that ladies so much prefer to making their own clothes—developed for the occasion. Well she knew what little respect was paid by dirty-booted sportsmen to such decorations. She had absolutely seen old fat farmer Whickenrake souse down on her floss silk pheasants as if they had been a truss of straw. All these considerations flashed across her mind with inconceivable velocity, causing her to bundle Maria out of the room, and rush into the kitchen to consult with the cook.

Bowdey, too, had his misgivings, and now said in a loud and audible voice, as he pulled up and gave the brightly burnished knob of the sash-door bell a pull, "You're *sure* you wont take anything but a glass of ale?"

"Well, no, I think not," drawled the Jug, looking undecidedly at Mr. Bunting; and then adding, "No, nothing, unless it were a pail of gruel for the horses."

"Pail of gruel for the horses," repeated Mr. Bowderoukins; "pail

of gruel for the horses, certainly; will you have it here or ——?" dreading to name where.

"P'raps we may as well put them into the stable for a few minutes," observed Mr. Boyston to Mr. Bunting.

"Well," assented Mr. Bunting, who now looked upon Mr. Boyston as master of the horse.

The "well" pulled on Mr. Bowderoukins's ear like a death-knell. He wished he had never gone to the gate.

Mrs. Bowderoukins, too, though out of ear-shot, saw by the movement there was mischief, and dreaded the result. Mrs. Tom Tucker, too, coming to dine—a woman who saw and told everything. "Oh dear! Bowderoukins must be ——." So saying, she hurried away to the dairy-window, which commanded a view of the yard, and there saw the dreadful apparition of the two red-coats alighting from their horses and leading them into the stable. "They shalln't come in the back way, at all events," said she to herself, bolting the door and turning the key in the lock. Archy Ellenger had once slipped in that way and caught her whipping a cream. Nor was Mrs. Bowderoukins premature in her movements, for scarcely had she communicated her worst fears to the cook ere a rattle at the latch, followed by a kick from one of the Jug's great thick-soled boots, announced an attempt to get in by the forbidden way.

"Come round to the front door!" now holloaed Bowderoukins from the centre of the yard. "Come round to the front door!" repeated he, extending his right arm in the direction he wanted them to go. The trio then formed and retraced their steps to the front. Dreadful, indeed, was now the agony of Mrs. Bowderoukins. She saw there was going to be a pretty kettle of fish. Bowdey, too, was in such a state of tribulation, that Mr. Bunting's flattering observations on the beauty of his place were wholly lost in considering what he should do with his guests—where he should put them—what he should give them; above all, how he should get rid of them. Meanwhile the old Jug trudged on in his usual stolid way—his whip under his arm, his hands behind his back, and the accumulated mud of the day clustering on his boots. How Bowderoukins shuddered as he looked at them. "Unlucky man, that he was! What the deuce sent him down to the gate! Why didn't he let them pass." The trio were now, however, again at the door, which Paul had left open, as if expecting a return; and our greatly perturbed host made a last desperate effort to get rid of them by saying, "Will you have your ale here? get it in a minute! you know,"—looking as if he would run for it himself.

"May as well go in, now that we have got off our horses," replied the Jug, stumping into the passage, and taking off his hat, he stuck his whip in his coat-pocket, in a quite-at-home sort of way. Mr. Bunting followed on, and there was then no help for it. A rapid retrospect made Bowderoukins resolve to brave it out in the dining-

room, hoping that the sight of coming company might act as a hint to the strangers not to stay. So he threw open the door, and in they walked.

"*Humph*, dinner party, have you?" observed the Jug, looking at the long table; "thought I smelt soup—dessay you could let us have a basin—just the thing for this time of day."

"By all means," replied the disconcerted Bowderoukins, adding, "I'll go and see after it myself, in order that you may not be detained." So saying, he hurried out of the room and nearly upset Mrs. Bowderoukins, who was listening at the key-hole.

"Oh, Bowderoukins! Bowderoukins!" whispered she, with ill-suppressed anger, as she followed him hastily along the passage—"how *could* you ever do such a thing—how *are* we to manage matters? What possible occasion was there for you to bring in these hungry fox-hunters? fox-hunters! of all men the most rapacious!"

"My dear, I didn't bring them in," whispered Bowdey, turning short upon her; "they invited themselves—didn't you hear them asking for soup?"

"Soup, my dear, they can't have soup! There's only just as much as will serve the party."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Mr. Bowderoukins, perplexed beyond measure. "What can they have then?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Mrs. Bowderoukins. "There's stewed pears, or cheese-cakes, or tartlets, or something of that sort."

"Oh, stewed pears or tartlets will do nothing for fox-hunters," snapped Mr. Bowderoukins; "must be meat of some sort—do let us get them something and set them away as soon as we can, or they will assuredly drive us into a fix with our dinner."

"I feel that they'll do that as it is," whined Mrs. Bowderoukins, "and I'm sure there's no occasion for any mismanagement with Mrs. Tom Tucker coming. Don't you remember how she quizzed Mrs. Frogbrook, and talked of Mrs. Dixey and her doings?"

The name of Tucker seemed to exasperate Bowderoukins, who, dashing at a fine stilton cheese as it now stood up to its chin in a clean damask napkin, hurried away with it, calling to Paul to put on his coat and follow with a loaf of bread and some beer as quickly as possible.

When Mr. Bowderoukins returned to the dining-room, he found the Jug sitting with his back to the fire, resting his great heavy head on his arm on the top of the chair, which he had turned round for the purpose, with a perfect shower of mud under each distended leg on the smart Turkey carpet.

"Here!" exclaimed Bowderoukins, with ill-counterfeited glee, holding the cheese high above his head, "I know you fox-hunters don't like to be kept waiting, so I've brought you the first thing I could lay

hold of," placing the cheese on the table just opposite the Jug as he spoke.

"*Humph!* Cheese is it," observed the Jug, carelessly; "I thought you said soup."

"The soup wouldn't be ready this half-hour," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, "and I thought you would like to be doing."

"Oh, why, we're in no hurry for that matter," drawled the Jug—"don't dine till six thirty; however, as the cheese has come, we may as well attack it," continued he, advancing his chair a little as he sat, to the great detriment of the joints. He then dived deeply into the cheese, and, having helped himself plentifully, pushed it along to Mr. Bunting. The bread and beer then appeared.

Munch, munch, munch, now went the Jug, in the steady deliberate sort of way in which he did everything. *Munch, munch, munch,* continued he, to the evident horror of his host.

"Have a little ale," suggested Mr. Bowderoukins, slightly elevating his tenpenny—pointing to the foaming tankard as he spoke.

"Presently," replied the Jug, without taking his eyes off the cheese.

"Deuce take the fellow," inwardly growled Mr. Bowderoukins, wishing he had never seen his great red face.

Munch, munch, munch, went the leisurely Jug as before.

"Now I'll have a little," at last said the Jug, looking up and holding his glass out to be filled.

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, pouring him out a bumper, which the Jug disposed of at a draught.

"Not very strong," observed he, setting the glass down.

"Can have some bottled Bass if you prefer it," observed Mr. Bowderoukins, incautiously.

"Bottled Bass, can I?" repeated the Jug; adding, after a pause, "Well, I don't care if I have a little bottled Bass."

Mr. Bowderoukins rang the bell vehemently.

"Bottle of ale, Paul!" exclaimed he, as the footman entered.

"Yes, sir," said the man-boy, retiring.

"*Quick!*" exclaimed Bowderoukins, adding, "the gentlemen are in a hurry."

"No, we're not," replied the Jug, again attacking the cheese.

The Bass was a good deal better than the beer, and the Jug, having swigged off a glass, said he felt all the better for it.

"Have another!" exclaimed his host, holding up the bottle.

"Presently," replied the Jug, returning to his cheese.

"Oh, Bowderoukins, Bowderoukins, what a goothe you are," lisped his agonised wife, who had now returned to her listening-place at the door. "However *is* a dinner to be served under such circumstances?"

Meanwhile the phlegmatic Jug jogged on with his cheese with his usual stolid vacancy, Mr. Bunting only eating for conformity. At length the Jug's appetite was apparently appeased, and having drained

the bottle of Bass, he rose from his seat, and taking a coat-lap under each arm, proceeded to warm himself before the fire. Having duly

sucked his teeth and made all sorts of incoherent noises with his mouth, he began to take a vacant survey of the room, the ceiling, the pictures, the sideboard, &c. As ill-luck would have it, there was a bottle of sherry on the latter, minus a couple of glasses that Mrs. Bowderoukins had just extracted for the mock-turtle soup; and the Jug, having made a good steady point at it from where he stood, at length said, "Is that sherry?" nodding at the bottle as he spoke.

"Shc—shc—sherry!" ejaculated Mr. Bowderoukins; "no, b—b—brandy," thinking to choke the Jug off.

"Ah, well, brandy will do as well," observed the Jug, carelessly taking a wine-glass from beside him and trudging round the long table

to where the bottle stood on the sideboard. He then poured himself out a glass, and, after smelling at the contents, drank it off with a gulp. "Brandy!" exclaimed he, smacking his great thick lips; "brandy! sherry, I should say, not bad either. Have a glass, Bunting," continued he, appealing to our friend as he approached him with the bottle.

"Oh dear! oh dear! this will never do," mused Mrs. Bowderoukins, who overheard the movement and observation from where she stood. "I must make a desperate effort to get rid of them;" so saying, she rose and hurried away to Paul's pantry, who was now putting the last polish on to the plate. "Go into the dining-room—*not as if from me*, you know," said she, *sotto voce*—"and ask the gentlemen if they would like to have their horses round."

"Yes, Mum," replied Paul, taking down the blue red-edged livery-coat from the peg behind the door and wriggling himself into it as he went. He opened the dining-room door noiselessly, and, gliding in, addressing Mr. Boyston, said, "Please, sir, would you like to have your hosses round, sir?"

"Presently," replied the Jug—"presently," pouring himself out another glass of sherry, and resuming his backward seat on the chair before the fire, with the bottle full before him.

"That 's Gordon's Golden, I should say," observed the Jug, smacking his lips, and looking at the now diminished quantity.

"No, Christopher's," replied Mr. Bowderoukins.

"Christopher's, is it?" replied the Jug, taking another glass, as if to satisfy himself on the point. "Christopher's, in Great Coram Street—I know him," continued he, drinking the wine off. "Very good it is," added the Jug, nursing his glass on his knee—with the evident view of replenishing it. "You haven't such a thing as a biscuit in the house, have you?" asked he, addressing Mr. Bowderoukins.

"Biscuit," gasped Bowderoukins—thinking his guests would never go—"biscuit!" repeated he, "Yes, I dare say I have," ringing the bell as he spoke.

Great was Mrs. Bowderoukins's horror when she found the summons was not for the horses. At first she declared there were no biscuits, although she had a whole bag-full in the store-room, then considering the voracious fox-hunters might demand something else, she determined to give them some biscuits, and tell Paul to make another announcement about the horses, so, getting a plate, she put a couple of biscuits upon it, and desired Paul to let the gentlemen know their horses had done their gruel.

"Done, have they?" replied the Jug carelessly, helping himself to a biscuit—"done, have they—well, then, give them each a feed of corn"—stretching his arm out again for the bottle as he spoke.

The Jug then looked first at one great boot, and then at the other, and finally cocking up his heels, began jingling his spur against the

French-polished chair-legs, with his glass on his knee, and a steady eye on the bottle.

Thus he continued for some minutes, Mr. Bunting and his host mutually wishing he would go. Mrs. Bowderoukins, like all people away from the absolute scene of action, was doubly solicitous, imagining all sorts of misfortunes; now that they would upset the bottle all down the fine pheasant-patterned table-cloth, now that they would all get drunk together, now that the Jug would catch the cloth with his spur, and drag the whole contents of the table on to the floor—candelabra, candlesticks, china-vases, wax-flowers, and all. At length she could contain herself no longer, and, summoning Paul again, she desired him to go into the dining-room and tell the gentlemen their horses were quite ready.

"Please, sir, your horses are quite ready," said Paul, addressing the Jug, who had just helped himself to another bumper of wine.

"Oh, Paul! Paul! why persecutest thou me!" exclaimed the Jug peevishly, amidst the mirth of the party at his unwonted explosion.

It was now clearly a case of "finish the bottle;" so Mr. Bowderoukins, changing his tactics, directed his exertions that way. "Help yourself!" exclaimed he gaily, as the Jug sat nursing his glass on his knee; "I'm afraid you don't like the wine."

"Oh, yes I do," replied the Jug; "the wine's good wine."

"It *is* good wine," assented Mr. Bowderoukins, "the best I can buy."

The Jug then showed his appreciation of it by taking another glass.

The wine presently approached the bottom of the bottle; and Mr. Bowderoukins, determining not to be inveigled into a second bottle, seized an empty glass, and helping himself to a small quantity of wine, held the glass up, saying, "Well, sir, I'll give you our next merry meeting!"

"Our next merry meeting," growled the Jug, in his usual lugubrious accents.

Having quaffed off the glass, he sat a few seconds with it on his knee, as if to be sure there was no more wine coming. Mr. Bunting, who had noticed their host's perturbation, now came to the rescue by saying, he supposed they had better be going.

"Well, I suppose we had," replied the Jug, rising and shaking the further dried mud off his boots as he set down the glass on the table.

"Will you go to the stable or have the horses brought to the door?" now asked Mr. Bowderoukins.

"May as well have them to the door," replied the Jug, who didn't like trouble.

"I'll go and send them round, then," said Mr. Bowderoukins, hurrying out of the room, and communicating the glad intelligence to his half-frantic wife that they were going at last.

"Have a weed?" now asked the Jug, diving into his breast-pocket

and producing a greasy old Russia leather cigar-case as he spoke, and offering the choice of a row of cigars to our friend.

"Thanks," replied Mr. Bunting, helping himself to one; adding, "we musn't smoke here, though, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," rejoined the Jug, taking a cedar match out of the bronze stand on the black marble mantel-piece and applying it to the fire. "These things are meant to light them with," said he; so saying, he used one for the purpose, and putting it to the cigar, presently raised a good cloud of smoke.

"Gwacious goodness, they're smoking, I do believe!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, who had the greatest horror of tobacco, and knew that Mrs. Tom Tucker had too. "Oh, Bowdey, Bowdey, run and hurry them with their horses, or they'll make the whole house reek like a tenth-rate tavern."

Whereupon Bowderoukins crowned himself again with his drab wide awake, and rushed frantically up to the stable just as the Jug's horse put his head out of the door. "Quick, Paul, quick!" cried he to the footman who had charge of it, "the gentlemen are in a hurry to be off!—the gentlemen are in a hurry to be off!"

But when Paul, followed by Dick Harwood, the pottering man of all work, hurried into the ring before the house they caused no corresponding activity in the parlour within, for the Jug just went on puffing and blowing dense clouds of smoke above and around his great fiery face.

"Horses are come! horses are come!" exclaimed Bowderoukins, opening the dining-room door, as if to promote the egress of his guests.

(Puff) "I see," (puff) said the Jug, staring vacantly at them through the window, and resuming his cigar.

"Can I lend you a Mackintosh, a paletot, or an overcoat of any sort?" now asked Mr. Bowderoukin, still standing at the open door.

"No, (puff) I'll (puff) as I am," replied the Jug, emitting a voluminous cloud over his great red face.

"Well, then, let us be off," said Mr. Bunting, who really began to feel ashamed of his friend.

"Off, (puff) off!" replied the Jug; "why, I've been (puffing) for you."

"The deuce you have," said Mr. Bunting; "I wish I'd known that before;" adding, "come, then, let's go."

The Jug then dived into his coat pockets, and fishing up first a pair of old dog-skin gloves, and then a pair of dirty white mits, proceeded to thrust his hands and wrists in them. That feat being accomplished, he then looked leisurely at Mr. Bunting and said, "Now I'm your (puff) man."

"Bye old (puff) boy," said the Jug, now advancing and tendering a fat gloved hand to his host.

"*Good* bye," exclaimed the emancipated Bowdey, grasping it fervidly.

"I'll (puff) in upon you again the first time I'm (puffing) this way," observed the Jug.

"Do!" exclaimed Mr. Bowderoukins, again shaking him heartily by the hand, thinking the Jug would be very sly if he got in.

Mr. Bunting then tendered his adieus; and proceeding to the door, the Jug got his horse punched as close up to the step as he could, to enable him to mount with as little trouble as possible: and having gained the saddle he drew rein, and feeling him gently with his spur, passed on to let Mr. Bunting mount the same way. That done, the two red-coated gentlemen sauntered away, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Bowderoukins eying and objurgating them from the dining-room window.

"Was there ever such a man as that Mr. Boyston!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, from behind the window curtain; "was there ever such a man as that Mr. Boyston! He's made the place smell like a pot-house. Wonder you let them in, Mister Bowderoukins," added she, shaking with vexation.

"Couldn't keep them out, my dear, couldn't keep them out," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, soothingly; "fox-hunters, you know, will be in. It's the red coat that does it—it's the red coat that does it."

"Oh fiddle! I've no notion of anything of the sort. I don't see why they should have the run of one's house any more than soldiers or sailors or other way-faring people."

The rising dialogue was here interrupted by a horse's nose, with a silver crest (a star fish) flopping over its forehead, suddenly rounding the laurel clump of the drive, causing the now terrified Mr. Bowderoukins to ejaculate,

"What have we got here, Mistress Bowderoukins?"

"Oh, gwacious goodness! it's Mrs. Mitchison. That unhappy woman's clock is always half an hour fast." So saying, she rushed out of the room, and hurried up stairs to arrange her *toilette*, amid the clamorous peal of the door-bell—strange servants always making a point of pulling as hard as they can. And ere Mrs. Bowderoukins got her best bib and tucker on, another and another peal sounded furiously through the house, another and another letting down of steps was heard, another and another slamming to of doors and grinding away to the back premises.

Mr. and Mrs. Bowderoukins were both in *extremis*. Bowdey couldn't find his best blue Saxony coat, or Mrs. Roukins her cameo bracelet or cashmere shawl. At length, after almost superhuman exertions, they accomplished their respective programmes, and came smiling into the drawing-room, full of apologies to the now grinning but lately groaning guests for not being ready to receive them. "The fact was, some fox-hunting friends had dropped in and ra-a-ther detained them. But they hoped," &c. And then the conversation took a fox-hunting turn.

"Did Mr. Bowderoukins hunt?"

"No, Mr. Bowderoukins didn't hunt—had given it up—used to be very fond of it;" most people thinking it necessary to pay hunting the compliment of pretending they liked it once.

Then the door-bell rang again furiously—more company coming—the dread Mrs. Tucker this time, followed quickly by the Bondells and the Hollcydales, and, lastly, the Freemans, who brought young Mr. Shuttleworth, who was suitoring Miss Harriet, instead of papa, who had got a twinge of the gout. And when the conversation, which became rather languid, had got cherished up into a pretty good cry, dinner was announced; and after a little backing and bowing, and "you before-me-ing," the guests, Mr. Shuttleworth and Miss Harriet included, all got arranged in pretty good order in the tobacco-smelling dining-room, the scent of which, however, was forgotten on the second explosion of the popular sparkling beverage.

So the lunch and the dinner did not clash after all, an announcement that we are sure will give great satisfaction to our housekeeping readers, and encourage them to be generous to the old fox-hunting Jugs, whose name in some countries is LEGION!

CHAPTER LXXVI.

APPLETON HALL.

MR. JOVEY JESSOP was right when he said the Jug knew every gate and gap in the country, for no sooner had Mr. Bunting and he got clear of Mr. Bowderoukins's premises than the Jug stopped short at the corner of a grass-field, and, fishing a furze-bush out of the hedge with the handle of his hunting-whip, put his horse at the now open place, saying to Mr. Bunting as he rose it, "May as well go over here."

Mr. Bunting then followed his leader's example, and the two were presently sailing over the sound sward of an old pasture, the horses cantering gaily together over the high ridge and furrow. Though there was no apparent way out, the Jug sat leisurely on his horse as if in the full confidence of a comfortable exit, and, making for the cattle shed at the end, he passed at the back of it, and pulling out a rail that had been interlaced with the quickset fence, hopped over the lower one and was again upon grass.

"Needn't mind putting it in again," observed he, looking back at Mr. Bunting, "there are no stock in either field;" so saying, the Jug again slouched in his saddle, and went cantering away to a good blue gate opening upon the Farmanby and Oxmanfield road. That gained, he kept its course for some three hundred yards, when again stopping

short the Jug brushed through a weak place in the adjoining hedge and was again on turf. He was now upon Mr. Hollamby's farm, with its trim hedges, piped ditches, and self-shutting gates, which being sped over, a short divergence over all that now remains of the once wide-stretching Scrubbington Common brought them to the locked iron gates of Flowerdale Lodge.

"Must be through here," observed the Jug to his companion, "cuts off three-quarters of a mile. Holloa, gate! gate!" roared he, rising in his stirrups and pretending to be in a desperate hurry. "Look sharp, woman! look sharp!" now cried he, as old Peggy Porringer the custodian came toddling along to take a survey through the bars of the barrier. "Look sharp, woman! look sharp," repeated he, "the hounds are running! the hounds are running! and we shall be left immeasurably in the lurch!"

Seeing red coats, Peggy unlocked and opened the gates, and the Jug, followed by Mr. Bunting, spurring his horse, passed through, and the two went cantering up the avenue as far as the Lodge commanded a view of the line.

"May take it easy now," observed the Jug, pulling up; adding, "there are no locked gates at the other end, and if they won't let us keep the road, I know a way through the fields." So saying, he relaxed into a gentle trot, and passing unchallenged at the back of the gardens, passed the keeper's lodge, and out at the saw-mill on the Sunburry road. This line they kept for some distance, till at length a once white wicket, between rather ornamental stone posts at the low end of a belt of beech, announced a change of scene; and the Jug, pushing the unlatched gate open with his toe, turned his willing horse to it, who entered of its own accord.

"What place is this?" now asked our hero, fearing they were going to commit another trespass.

"All right," replied the Jug, "all right;" adding, "this is Appleton."

"Appleton, is it," rejoined Mr. Bunting, as a glorious sunset illuminated the many windows of a large stone mansion. "Appleton, is it; it's a very fine place. Tell me," added he, "is Mr. Jessop married?"

"Married, no! hadn't need," replied the Jug, laughing.

Mr. Bunting looked confused.

"Not that I mean to say anything disrespectful of matrimony," observed the Jug, apologetically; "only I mean to say that Appleton wouldn't quite suit a lady."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Bunting, adding, "Why not? It's large enough at all events, and nobody ever saw a house that was too large for a lady."

"Large enough," said the Jug, looking at it; "large enough, only there's no furniture in it."

"Oh, indeed," smiled Mr. Bunting, adding, "that's rather against it; but how do Mr. Jessop and you manage then?"

"O we just knock on the best way we can. Jessop don't care for finery; no more do I; so we get on well enough—the stables are good, and so is the eating and drinking; and, between ourselves, I'm not sure but that dinners are quite as comfortable without the ladies, for you see they have all dined beforehand, and only come to show their clothes and talk and interrupt one in one's eating."

"Well, but they help to pass the evening pleasantly at all events," observed Mr. Bunting.

"Oh, have them in the evening if you like," rejoined the Jug; "have them in the evening if you like—they are all very well in the evening; then they can spread their sails and show off, but when they are jammed and crammed under a dinner-table there is nothing for them but to poke one with questions and put one out of one's stride, with one's soup, or one's fish, or one's something."

A nearer approach of our horsemen to the mansion now began to show the imperfections of the place. There was a sad want of maintenance about it—patched roofs, inefficient spouts, broken rails, restive gates, and blotchy, blistery doors.

Some houses in the country let as soon as they become vacant, others will not let at all. Of this latter description was Appleton Hall—it infested the country papers till everybody was tired of seeing it. Appleton Hall with its spacious park and beautiful pleasure-grounds —Appleton Hall with its pineries and vineries—Appleton Hall with its sporting attractions. It had tried its luck as a ladies' school, also as a nunnery, and a cold-water-cure establishment, and had signally failed in all—each succeeding occupant leaving the house worse than he found it, the cold-water-cure gentleman being generally supposed to have stolen the lead off the roof.

When a house gets to this deplorable state there is nothing for it but either to let it tumble down or to let it off in tenements; and there not being sufficient population about Appleton for the latter purpose, the owner was extremely glad to close with Mr. Jovey Jessop's offer of doing the necessary repairs on condition of sitting rent free. So Mr. Jessop did up the stables, converted the coach-house into a kennel, the vinery into a shoe-house, the pinery into a saddle-room, restored the lost lead to the roof of the Hall, and made the premises water-tight generally. As, however, the owner expected to return to it every year himself, as indeed he had been expecting for the last twenty years, of course Mr. Jessop did not do more to it than was absolutely necessary, either inside or out.

And now let us suppose our friends to have disposed of their horses at the stable, and let us get them out of the cold night-air into the more comfortable atmosphere of the mansion. The Jug being a short-cut man generally now piloted our friend the back way instead of leading

him round to the Corinthian column-porticoed door, and across the lofty black and white marble-flagged entrance hall of the house. "I'll show you the way," said he, stumping along, occasionally meeting a man or a maid, who halted and stood respectfully aside to let the great guns pass. Traversing a cocoa-nut-matted passage, a genial glow of warmth from an open door shone upon them, and the Jug, now stopping, bowed Mr. Bunting into his bed-room. It was not a sumptuously furnished apartment—indeed it contained little beyond the absolute requirements of life, save an oil-painting of Boyston Hall, with the meet of Lord Spankerley's hounds on the lawn, above the mantelpiece, which the Jug used to sit and contemplate as he smoked his cigar, wondering if he would ever return to live at it again. His bed was a common stump one, very near the ground (for he was in the habit of tumbling out), two buff and green painted rush-bottomed chairs, a cream-coloured chest of drawers picked out with black, on the top of which stood the Jug's Sunday hat, his other pair of hot-tops, also the redoubtable jacks, that looked as if they might be applied to any purpose. On a common deal clothes-horse near the now blazing wood and coal fire were clean flannels and linen, and somewhat soiled nankin pantaloons, with very roomy dress-shoes and a pair of much-faded worsted-worked slippers in front. Here, too, was the remnant of a hearth-rug, with many holes in the middle, but whose texture was softer to the feet than the cocoa-nut-matting, with which the rest of the room was supplied. Before the unpainted washhand-stand, with its solitary white jug and basin, was the hide of our friend's once famous bay horse Dreadnought; but beyond the jug and basin and a water-bottle there was no bath or other symptom of enlarged lavement, the Jug, in truth, not being a great advocate for water.

"We don't sacrifice much to the Graces here," observed the Jug, as Mr. Bunting now approached his unshrouded toilette-table, with its shilling comb, its black bristly eighteen-penny brush, and its sixpenny pot of hard-featured pomatum, to have a look at himself in the glass. "We don't sacrifice much to the Graces," said he, "for we don't see the use of men dressing up smart to captivate each other; and though this is what they call a furnished house, there is in reality very little furniture in it. I was obliged to buy my own boot-jack," continued he, taking up a rather smart folding mahogany one; adding, "by the way, if your boots don't come off easily, I'll be happy to lend you it, for Jessop can kick his off flying, and says everybody should be able to do the same, so there isn't another in the house. It's rather a neat article," continued he, folding it up and showing it to Mr. Bunting—"French polished, brass hinges, steel screws—cost two shillings. Don't know a greater nuisance than pulling off one's boots with one's toes and kicking one's nails with one's heels. But come," continued he, laying the boot-jack on the dressing-table, "won't you be seated?"

pointing to his American rocking-chair, in which he dozed away life in anticipations of the future.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Bunting, now returning and seating himself on the high green fender before the fire. "You keep good fires here," observed he, as the warmth shot through him summarily.

"Capital," said the Jug, "good fires and good fare is the order of the house. By the way, would you like to take anything before dinner?"

"Thank you, no," replied Mr. Bunting, adding, "Mr. Bowdey what's-his-name has prevented that. What time do we dine?"

"Six thirty," replied the Jug, "six thirty, from the tenth of November to the tenth of February—seven at all other times of the year;" saying which our friend took a little hand-bell off the mantel-piece, and, going to the door, rang a prolonged peal in the passage. "No bells in this house," observed the Jug, returning and replacing it on its stand. "No bells at least that will ring, though there are plenty of wires and places where bells ought to be."

The summons was speedily answered by a neat but plainly dressed footman, in drab and red, by whom Mr. Boyston sent word to Ambrose the butler that there would be eight to dinner instead of six. Having thus discharged his commission, he used his French-polished boot-jack, and drawing off his boots put his feet into his slippers, and, exchanging his red coat for an old grey duffle dressing-gown, prepared his mouth for a smoke.

Mr. Bunting subsided into the American rocking-chair; the Jug put his two rush-bottomed chairs together, sitting upon one, and laying his legs on the other, and proceeded to breathe a strong trail of Havannah cigar-smoke round his face. His black eyes were steadily fixed on the picture of Boyston Park, but he was not in reality indulging in any reverie or speculation either as to the past or the future of it; for he was thinking over that day's run, and wondering if he had taken the water whether he would have got to the end of it. "Wished he had taken the (puff) water. If he had only taken the water, might have got Archey Ellenger a (curl) ducking, and altogether he was vexed he had not taken the water." Then he wondered which way they had gone. "Shouldn't be surprised if the fox had taken his old (puff) line, than which nothing could be (cloud) finer or better calculated to give a (curl) stranger a favourable impression of the (puff) country." And again he upbraided himself for not taking the (puff) water, and resolved on all future occasions to shut his (puff) eyes and just do as others did. "A ducking was nothing (puff) when a man had plenty of dry clothes (puff). Wouldn't do to sit in a (puff) railway carriage (cloud) in wet things; but on (puff) horseback it was (puff, cloud) nothing. Dashed if he wouldn't always take (puff) water in future."

Just as our friend had come to this resolution, a voice was heard in the passage exclaiming—

"Has anybody seen anything of Mr. Bunting? Has anybody seen anything of Mr. Bunting?"

"Mr. Bunting is in Mr. Boyston's room, sir," replied a servant; and scarcely had the Jug confirmed the answer with a view-holloa, ere a clank, clank, of spurs sounded along the passage, and the standing-a-jar door flying open revealed the person of Mr. Jovey Jessop in the full mud and enthusiasm of a victorious fox hunter. He was well splashed from head to foot. Advancing, he greeted Mr. Bunting with a cordial shake of the hand, welcoming him to Appleton Hall, apologising for not being there to receive him, and hoping his horse had carried him well, which Mr. Bunting assured him he had.

"Well, you've killed him I see," said the Jug, eyeing Mr. Jessop's pawed and blood-stained leathers.

"Killed him! aye to be sure!" replied Jovey, joyously, "killed him after as good a run as ever was seen;" adding, as he laid his hand on the Jug's broad back, "but what got you, my good friend?"

"What got me?" replied the Jug, thinking what he should say. "What got (puff) me? Why, you see I got bothered with the (curl) water—water's a bothering thing," added he, "if you don't take it at (curl) once there's an end of the (cloud) matter; for the more you look, the less you like it, and one (puff) person said one (cloud) thing and another another, till at last we lost the (curl) chance."

Mr. Jovey Jessop then briefly related the residue of the run; but, not wishing to crow, he presently turned the conversation by asking Mr. Bunting if he would like to take anything before dinner. Mr. Bowderoukins, however, having effectually prevented any want of that sort, our master presently retired to pass through his cold-water bath into his other clothes, leaving his guest to the intermediate care of his Jug. Mr. Boyston then resumed his former position, and sat in a meditative mood, with his eyes fixed on the Boyston picture, smoking and making a mental panorama of the concluding portion of the run, which he thought must have been very fine. At length his red-ended cigar approached so near the tip of his own red nose as to be no longer agreeable, whereupon he threw the remains into the fire, and, rising from his uneasy couch, took up the fine folding French-polished mahogany boot-jack, and offered to show Mr. Bunting the way to his bed-room. They then passed out of the Jug's apartment into the passage, and, our friend adhering to his short cuts, led him up the back stairs as if he were taking him to some second-rate bachelor bed-room instead of the state apartment of the house. The opening of a once red, but now nearly drab, baize-covered door at the first landing rectified matters, and introduced the stranger to the wider space and loftier proportions of an elegant staircase, whose perfections and imperfections were alike displayed by a profusion of well-directed light. On the once peach but now dirty drab-coloured walls might be traced the inscriptions and poetical effusions as well of the school girls as

of the nuns, and the patients of the cold-water-cure doctor who stole the lead, while sundry heads and hieroglyphics exhibited a bountiful ignorance of the art of drawing. Cocoa-nut-matting was still the order of the day—cocoa-nut-matting up the stairs, cocoanut-matting along the corridor, cocoa-nut-mats before the doors. A hurrying-out house-maid bearing the last putting-to-rights emblems in her arms denoted the door, and Mr. Boyston ushered Mr. Bunting into a noble room, whose blazing fire illumined the amber-coloured hangings of a prodigious four-post bed, which stood like a tabernacle in the centre. Both the bed-hangings and the window-curtains were festooned and draped in a way that looked as if there had been a trial of skill on the part of the upholsterers as to how much stuff they could put into each; a prodigality that was painfully at variance with the meagreness of the rest of the furniture. The flower-garlanded Brussells carpet was brushed into a mere shadow of its former self; there was no sofa; the chairs were few and far between, while an immense high-backed one stood like a throne by the fire, with a large foot-stool in front. The chamber-ware did not match, being of three sorts: white, blue, and green; but there was a good fire, an ample supply of nice linen, and a spacious hip-bath at hand.

"Plenty of bed," said the Jug, contrasting its great carved posts and lofty canopy with his own little stump one down below. "Hope you won't tumble out of it," continued he, thinking of his own exploits in that line.

"Hope not, indeed," replied Mr. Bunting, measuring its height from the floor with his eye, and thinking it would require a good spring to get into it.

"Well, now," said the Jug, taking his boot-jack from under his arm and unfolding it, "will you take your boots off now, or shall I leave this with you?"

"Oh, why, p'raps you may as well leave it with me," replied Mr. Bunting, carelessly.

"Well, then," rejoined the Jug, placing it on the floor, "will you have the kindness to put it into the toilette-table drawer when you are done with it, lest any of the careless maids carry it off?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Bunting, "certainly."

"So be it then," rejoined the Jug, wishing he might not be doing a rash act; adding, as he moved slowly away, "when you are dressed you will find your way down by the lights—no ladies' rooms here to get into by mistake."

CHAPTER LXXVII.

APPLETON HALL HOSPITALITY.

As parties in the country are only of rare occurrence, there was generally a dinner-party at Appleton Hall every hunting-day, to which sportsmen were asked, or invited themselves by sending or leaving their names with Ambrose the butler, on or before the morning of the day. The table was usually laid for six, which was easily extended to eight or ten, if the harvest of the hunting-field yielded a greater crop of guests.

Mr. Jessop being an even-going man, with the word "comfort" for his motto, there was never any fuss or hurry of inconvenience, Jovey and his Jug always having a good dinner, even if they sat down to it alone. Monsieur Ragout, the cook, of course liked to know when there was a new-comer, so that he might put on the extra steam of astonishment, otherwise the culinary current ran pretty evenly.

When our re-arranged hero descended the grand staircase, he found Ambrose and a drab and red liveried footman waiting to receive the candles of the inmates, and to meet and announce the out-of-door guests on their arrival. Receiving Mr. Bunting's candle with a bow, and handing it to the footman to set down, Ambrose conducted our friend across the spacious entrance hall towards a lofty, richly-carved, but very dirty door on the right. This being well thrown open, Mr. Bunting entered a large well-proportioned drawing-room, whose once costly gilding and decorations were almost made respectable by the force of the fire, and the light that was now thrown upon them. It was, however, but a momentary triumph, for a second glance showed the indignities to which the room had been subjected, as well by the girls as the nuns, and the cold-water-cure gentleman. The hundred guinea mirror was starred in three places, the white marble chimney-piece was chipped and scratched, the crest in the middle was wholly gone, while the coloured coat-of-arms was nearly obliterated.

Whatever extravagance there might have been in the furniture in former days, there was nothing of that sort now, for Mr. Jessop had discarded all the faded finery, substituting good cocoa-nut-matting for the fine Kidderminster carpet, whose holes were always tripping people up, *chassécd* the footstools and ottoman, and sent all the invalided furniture up stairs into the garret. It now looked more like a ball-room with a little hired rout furniture than anything else.

Some people look better in hunting things, others worse; Mr. Jessop, for instance, looked better, the Jug worse. Mr. Bunting scarcely knew the former, as he now stood in the usual British case-before-elegance style warming himself at the blazing fire. Neither would Mr. Bunting have recognised the Jug in his clerical costumed upper half, but for the notorious nankins below. Mr. Jessop, we may state, did not effect a dress-uniform, not wishing to promote the growth of cock-tails in the country. His theory was, that no man should be allowed to ride in scarlet who had not first ridden three seasons in black, an arrangement that he thought would be greatly productive of sport, for very few men, he observed, entered a fourth season—so that all their mischief was confined to the three years, which in all probability they would not take if they were not allowed to ride in red. So he always set the example of dressing quite plainly, not even wearing a hunt-button of an evening, and now, if he had been felt, he would have been found to be enveloped in black tweed, all except a cloth coat and black silk cravat.

Making way for Mr. Bunting at the fire, as he advanced up the room, Mr. Jessop hoped he had found all he wanted in his bed-room, adding, that as it was not a very sumptuously furnished house, he begged he would ring, or rather call for whatever was deficient; whereupon Mr. Bunting assured him there was every requirement, since his good friend Mr. Boyston had been good enough to lend him his boot-jack, which, he informed the owner, he had put safely into the drawer as requested: whereupon Mr. Jessop laughed, and said Boyston was very particular about his boot-jack, and had once nearly lost it by lending it to a friend. He then turned the conversation upon the more agreeable topic of dinner, asking Mr. Bunting if he was ready for his, whereupon Mr. Jessop made the grand announcement, that it was the rule of the house never to wait for anyone, adding, that it was wonderful what an effect it had in procuring punctuality.

The Jug then hauled a great turnip of a watch out of his nankin-trousered fob by the big sealed jack-chain to which it was attached, and first putting it to his ear, to be sure it was going, which was not always the case, the Jug sometimes forgetting to wind it up, he said it only wanted seven minutes to dinner.

"They'll all come in a rush," observed Mr. Jessop. "Wheeler brings Lightfoot, and Langford brings Daintry." When Mr. Bunting now thinking it was as cheap sitting as standing, advanced towards a scanty line of bird's-eye maple chairs ranged against the wall, from which he drew one, to bring to the fire.

"Stop half a minute!" cried Mr. Jessop, darting forward—"stop half a minute!" adding, "let's see that that chair will carry you, for its more than all the chairs in this room will do:" adding, "if you'd seen old Archey Ellenger go down, cup of coffee in hand, the

other night, you'd have been amused. The old sinner looked as if he thought he was wanted."

Mr. Jessop then took the chair, and, after trying its legs all round, as he would a horse's, stamped it soundly on all fours, saying—

"Yes, I think it'll do."

Mr. Bunting then deposited himself gingerly upon it, and ere three minutes more had elapsed, the sound of wheels outside was followed by the shuffling of feet within, and a faint sound of voices presently swelled into chorus as the coming party advanced to the drawing-room door.

"When are you going to get your door-bell replaced?" asked George Wheeler, as Jovey advanced to greet him.

"Hang the bell!—no ringing allowed here," replied Mr. Jessop, shaking hands, adding, "How are you all? What sort of a night is it?"

"Dinner is on the table," now announced Ambrose, advancing pompously up to the glad group.

"I told you so!" said Mr. Jessop, glancing at his watch, and showing Mr. Bunting that it was half-past six o'clock to a minute. "Come!" added he, taking Mr. Bunting by the arm, "let me show you the way;" so saying, he led him out of the drawing-room across the marble-flagged hall into the dining-room on the opposite side of the way. The spacious room was a perfect blaze of light. Ambrose had just given the fire a polishing stir, and which was lending its radiance to the effulgence of the wax and oil.

On the massive carved side-board at the far end stood the splendid Rough and Ready-shire testimonial—a magnificent candelabra, flanked by a profusion of beautiful glass and family plate.

"Where will you sit? Near the fire or from it?" asked our host, offering his guest the choice of seats at the round table, adding, "any of these chairs will carry you, for our friend Boyston there tries them all at high-pressure, and he rides fourteen stone in his nankins."

Mr. Bunting chose the chair with his back to the fire, and the red-coats and yellow facings of the Duke's men drawing up, the dark coats followed suit, and the Jug having said grace, quietly slipped his nankins under the table, and began to help the soup—while Ambrose and the footmen plied the plates, and lap, lap, sup, sup, was the order of the day. The dining, like the drawing-room, was large and dirty, the latter being more apparent when contrasted with the brightness of the plate and the snowy whiteness of the linen.

The Hydropathic gentleman used to sluice his patients in the bedroom above, and a continuous flow of drippings had expanded into a sort of large map of Europe on the ceiling. But it is now no time for airified criticism, looking at plaster, and looking at portraits, belongs to a much later period of the evening—these hungry gentlemen are much better employed in discussing Monsieur Ragout's varied

and excellent dishes, all sent in beautifully hot, and washing them down with copious draughts of sweet and dry. Monsieur had indeed exerted himself to the utmost, nor had Mrs. Allspice been behind in the sweets and savouries, for which she was so justly famous, and when the Jug's nankins again appeared, all the guests did feel extremely thankful for what they had received.

They then sat at ease, Wheeler turning to Lightfoot, and Daintry to Gumley, each couple with a distinct topic of conversation, while the table was arranged for the second part of the entertainment. A neat dessert, of which nice thin water-biscuits formed a prominent part, being set on, a goodly array of richly-cut decanters presently set sail from before Mr. Jessop — to the toast of "fox-hunting," which immediately raised the doings of the morning, prematurely cut short by the quick announcement of dinner, and the importance of discussing its delicacies under the Jug's injunction of the silent system. Then each man gave his own version of his own doings, explaining how it happened he wasn't up at the finish, one having lost a shoe, another having lost two, a third having followed a bad leader, and vowing he would always take a line of his own for the future,—a resolution very often come to after a good dinner.

The Jug, who was a steady "Port-if-you-please man," found a companion in Old Fullerton, while the rest adhered to the excellent Claret, which circulated briskly—the Jug keeping himself awake by repeated excursions to the bell, which sometimes rang and sometimes didn't—but, nevertheless, always produced the butler. The pace having somewhat slackened, devil'd biscuits made their appearance, which gave a slight impetus to the evening, and carried the guests through another bottle of Latour. At length the map of Europe began to be studied, the height and length of the room discussed, with occasional conjectures indulged in as to what would have been the fate of the house if Mr. Jessop had not taken it. Sherry then began to be asked for, clean glasses sought, watches slyly looked at, and other symptoms of complete satisfaction given. The Jug and Fullerton still held on with their second bottle of Port, but the former seeing the general inclination, trudged away to the old bell-place, and, on Ambrose appearing, said, "We'll take tea and coffee in here, if you please."

Ambrose then retired, and presently reappeared with his attendant aides-de-camp bearing the massive articles of the family plate-chest covered with the usual paraphernalia of the drawing-room, whereupon parties arose from the dining-table, shook their legs, took a turn up and down the room, agreeing that cocoa-nut-matting made a very good carpet, and then drew up to the salvers and sweets—creaming and sugaring themselves, each man to his mind. Meanwhile, the Jug having buzzed the bottle, gradually sunk into a profound sleep, at his end of the table, with his right hand on the glass, and was presently

dreaming o'er the events of the day, recalling Mr. Jessop's oft-repeated injunctions in going to cover, to keep the field quiet, and not let them press on the hounds, when the Jug, fancying himself again at the cover-side, with the Prince breaking away after the fox, exclaimed, "*Hold hard, you beggar with the beard!*" and raising his glass like a whip, dashed the whole contents full into his own face! Up the Jug jumped half blinded with wine, which streamed from his visage down on to the unfortunate nankins, looking such a figure of fun that even the most sympathising of the guests could not help laughing at him. Mr. Jessop, however, who was used to such scenes, just gave him a napkin to rub himself dry, which the Jug proceeded to do, merely observing that he "must have been dreaming." And this observation operating as a hint upon the dinner guests, there was presently a calling for carriages, great-coating, good-nighting, and getting away-ing. It being then past eleven o'clock, and Mr. Bunting declining any further potations, Mr. Jessop and he retired to bed, while the Jug went to have a quiet drink and a rock in his own room.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE BACHELOR BREAKFAST AND BILLY ROUGH'UN.

When Mr. Jovey Jessop awoke the next morning and thought over the events of the preceding day, as he lay cool and comfortable in his curtainless bed, for he was no kinder to himself than he was to his Jug, he felt rather sorry that he had said anything to Mr. Bunting about following Mr. Boyston, for, thought Jovey, our hero might have taken a line of his own, and seen the end of the run, whereas, he perhaps thought I told him to follow Tom Boyston for the sake of saving my horse. And being a liberal-minded man, and not liking to do things by halves Jovey considered how he could put matters right. That was a non-hunting day, but the hounds met at Branforth Bridge on the following one, and the Bold Pioneer would be all the better of the gallop from Brushwood Banks; so he determined if the horse was all right to offer him again to Mr. Bunting. That point decided, he bounded out of bed, and after passing through his bath, proceeded to array himself in a loosely fitting suit of black and green tweed. Though so punctual to his dinner, Mr. Jessop was quite a latitudinarian in the matter of breakfast, and guests just rolled in, and rang or called for theirs whenever they liked, each man having his own tea-pot, and water-pot, eggs, muffin, toast, and so on, after the manner of the Clubs, while there was always a plentiful supply of cold meat and game on the sideboard, and fish, omelette, and frys in a great

iron stand before the fire. So breakfasting continued till everybody was done, when the remains were removed, a clean cloth supplied, and the cold meats advanced from the sideboard to the dining-table, for the entertainment of those who might drop in during the day. So long as Mr. Jessop was not obliged to partake, he was always glad to give anybody a luncheon, and the Jug's appetite being accommodating, he found him useful in the eating as well as in the drinking-way.

Mr. Jessop having made the tour of the stables and found all right as regarded the Bold Pioneer, dropped into the dining-room just as the Jug was inducting Mr. Bunting into the mysteries of the morning meal, and after the usual good mornings, greetings, and common-places about the weather, he gradually broached the handsome proposition about the horse.

Mr. Bunting was surprised, for he had not lived sufficiently among fox-hunters to know their general kindly disposition, and, moreover, had about arranged in his own mind to take Privett Grove in his way home; but the Jug devoting the intervals between munching a large plate of brawn, and washing it down with plentiful libations of tea to seconding Mr. Jessop's proposition, our hero paused in his resolution, and considered whether staying on might not be as agreeable as spending the evening alone at Burton St. Leger. And as Mr. Jessop seemed to be sincere in what he said, and the Jug occasionally threw in an approving tongue between mouthfuls, Mr. Bunting was not very difficult to overcome. Mr. Jessop then rang or rather shook the bell wire for his own breakfast, oatmeal porridge and a thin rump-steak with fried potatoes, pending which, Monsieur Ragout appeared with his bill of fare for that day, and to receive the compliments of the company for his performance on the preceding one. There is no keeping a French cook up to the collar unless you flatter him well. Cash without compliments won't do; so Mr. Jessop, and the guest, and the Jug, all joined in his praise. Monsieur having passed his bill of fare with the addition of an omelette soufflée at the suggestion of the Jug, then withdrew, and Mr. Jessop proceeded to enjoy his breakfast in the leisurely way of a man who generally has to hurry it. That being his business day, when he went through his accounts, he then bethought him how he could assist his Jug in getting his guest through the interval. Library there was none, at least there were no books in it; indeed the room was made into a servants' dormitory, and though Mr. Jessop took in the *Times*, and the Jug *Bell's Life* and the *Field*, even these with the assistance of the *Post-Office Directory*, which the Jug was much given to studying, would hardly suffice for a stranger.

"What are you going to do to-day, Tom?" now asked our master as he played away at his steak, thinking to see if his coadjutor could help him out with an idea.

"Me, oh, why, I—thought of taking a round with the harriers,"

drawled Boyston, as if he had not quite made up his mind on the matter.

"Ah, to be sure! the very thing!" replied Mr. Jessop, gaily turning to Mr. Bunting, and saying, "And why shouldn't you go?"

"I have no horse," replied Mr. Bunting; who, indeed, did not care much for hunting if it did not include the scarlet.

"Oh, I'll find you a horse," replied Mr. Jessop. "I'll find you a horse—there 's my little grey Merrylegs, the very thing for harriers—carry you like winking, won't he Boyston?"

"Capitally," replied the Jug, still holding on steadily at his breakfast.

"Just order him when you are inclined to go;" then said Mr. Jessop, addressing the Jug.

"I will," replied he, gulping down his last mouthful of tea; then chucking his napkin away, he arose and stumped leisurely away to the windows with his hands in his side-pockets.

"Fine day," observed he, after a good vacant stare outside.

"Oh, fine day," replied Mr. Jessop. "Fine day as can be—I only hope it will keep this way over to-morrow."

"Well, then I'm ready when you're ready," observed the Jug, addressing Mr. Bunting.

"You'd better say, when," replied our hero.

"No hurry with harriers," rejoined the Jug, "can always catch them up; but as the day 's fine, we may as well be in the open air as in the house. So what say you to half an hour?"

"So be it," said Mr. Bunting, whereupon the Jug stumped away to the stables to order the horses.

Now it so happened that the Jug had just got a new horse; "Lofty" his late owner called him on account of his high action, Billy Rough'un the Jug called him, because of his shaking him so. He was a grand horse with a great inclination for the chase, but he was too many for most people, hence he passed from hand to hand at always receding prices, until he came down to the Jug's figure—a twenty pound note. And having tried various bits upon him with but indifferent success, our friend bethought him that the best way to prevent Billy pulling his arms off was to give him a little more work, so he resolved to treat him to a round with the harriers the day before hunting with the foxhounds whenever he could. To this end he made the acquaintance of our before-mentioned Jonathan Jobling, who, though no great admirer of the red coats in general—certainly not of those with yellow collars to them—yet agreed out of respect for Mr. Jessop, to send Mr. Boyston his card, provided he did not come out in white cords, of which Jonathan had a mortal aversion, Lord Marchhare having ridden over the pride of his heart, the beautiful Bluebell, when so attired. And the Jug having found the first day with the harriers very beneficial upon his new horse, and not being

at all fond of a large washing bill, had no difficulty in complying with the terms, as to omitting the white cords.

So much for the rider, now for a word about the horse.

Billy Rough'un was a grand horse, stood sixteen hands, with strength and speed of the first order. He could go as fast through plough as he could upon grass. He was a darkish bay, with a large star, and a white fore foot, capital legs and loins, with a small well set on head. His fault was being too much of a horse, too keen and anxious to be with hounds, which, combined with a very high rough action, put as it were two days' work into one for his rider. Indeed if Billy was not regularly worked there was no riding him, and he had nearly shaken the hearts out of half-a-dozen people before the Jug got him. Not that Billy had any vice in him, it was only his impetuosity that made him unpopular. He was a sort of horse that a looker on liked better than the person that was on him. There is no secret so close as that between a rider and his horse.

When Billy, then called Lofty, stepped out of Mr. Blandisher the dealer's yard, he was a hundred and ninety guineas' worth, a ten pound note having somehow slipped off his two hundred guinea price during the transaction, and though undoubtedly rough, yet when not in his excited knock-his-knee-against-his-tooth action, by no means an unpleasant horse to ride. He was then the property of Mr. George Dallimore, a weakly constituted gentleman, who had been recommended horse exercise on account of his health; and when George first appeared at Weston Wood side with Lord Furzebrake's hounds, Lofty was pronounced by the *cognoscenti* to be a deuced nice sporting-looking nag. George, however, had not been on him half an hour, before the bay horse had been changed into a white one, and finding as soon as the fox broke away that he must be first (which was by no means George's place) or no where, he thought he had better be no where, and so went home. Blandisher, however, was a kind man, and readily exchanged him for an easy oily going gray,—a sort of animal that would do for a Roseberry Rocks riding master, and sold Lofty again the next day for about his old figure, Blandisher making an uncommonly handsome profit by the transaction. The next purchaser was one of the same sort, a light man who fancied himself heavy, and wanted something above his weight, which Lofty certainly was, stotting him up and down like a parched pea on a drumhead, tiring him completely and sending him asleep almost as soon as the cloth was drawn after dinner. He then sold him to a youth, with whom Lofty, certainly under great provocation, ran away, whereupon he was pronounced vicious, and quickly came down to the Jug's price, who devised the expedient for curing him we have already mentioned. Billy, however, had no vice in him, it was sheer love of hunting and disgust at being ridden by tailors who had not the sense to appreciate his spirit. If he let people down at little places, it was only because they never gave him a

chance at big ones. It was no use trying to deceive Billy Rough'un about hunting—no use sending him on alone with a lad in a jacket and trousers, as if he were going to exercise—he knew as well as the genius who saddled him what he was going to do. The first red coat he saw on the road set him on grinding his teeth, fretting and trying to be on—what he wanted was to be with the hounds. Even on the present occasion, when the Jug turned out in his old round-crowned deer-stalking hat, brown sea-side jacket and long leather gaiters, the horse felt by the hunting martingal on his shoulders what he was going to do. And when little Merrylegs came prancing out of the stable for the dandified Mr. Bunting to mount, Billy gave a half squeak, as much as to say, now we'll have some fun together, you and I.

"*Wh-o-a-y!*" cried the Jug, hoisting himself on, adding, "I'll take the nonsense out of you when I get you on to the Downs." So saying, he drew reins and piloted our hero out of the yard.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

MR. JONATHAN JOBLING'S HARRIERS.

Mr. Jonathan Jobling had two distinct countries, hill and vale, the hill formed of fine open undulating downs, the vale of very stiff, cramped, awkward enclosures. On a clear day nothing could be finer than a gallop over the sound turf of the downs, swelling and falling sufficiently to give zest and impetus to the horse without endangering the neck of the rider. Here, indeed, a man could see hunting in its wildest openest form, there being nothing to distract his attention with regard to progression, there not being even the fear of a water furrow in the bottoms. He could go sailing away wherever the hounds went—seeing the find, the forward, the double, the triple, the Gordian knot itself unravelled.

Jonathan was a real great man, stood six feet two in his stocking feet, and weighed twenty stone, at least, that was his reputed weight, for he had declined the scales for many years before the period of our story. He had begun hunting when bed-gown coats were the order of the day, a fashion that he still retained, and now had as much cloth in each lap as would make a moderate sized modern exquisite a coat. How many bed-gowns, the great white mother-of-pearl buttons with the black hares engraved upon them had worn out, it was impossible to say; Jonathan himself having lost all count of them. They were numerous, and yet Jonathan was not the man to give up a coat upon slight provocation. They descended gradually, the shiney No. I.

of sunny weather, being a long time before it became the faded No. II. of doubtful days, still longer ere it was the patched and tattered No. III. of desperate wet and stormy ones. Number IV. generally occupied the post of a "flay craw," in the fields. His boots and breeches corresponded with his coat, large, roomy, and rough, drab with brass buttons, and boots brown without effect, while his ponderous hammer-headed whip in the hands of a misguided man, would be enough to make the blood curdle in one's veins. His horses of course were of the largest, most formidable order, and to see Jonathan tearing away after his hounds with his great coat laps flying out, followed by the usual miscellaneous assortment of a harrier field gave him much the appearance of a gigantic hen and chickens. But we are going to have a day or rather half a day with him at Missendon rubbing Post, so we had better be getting on as he is a man to a minute, and never waits for any one.

The rubbing post was at least five miles from Appleton Hall—that is to say, five miles by the road—but the Jug with his great geographical knowledge and acquaintance with gaps and short cuts could ride it in three and a half or four. First he took the liberty of going through the Rev. Mr. Spintext's glebe, then he was sure Widow Weatherly would have no objection to their passing along the top of her seeds, though he knew Widow Weatherly had the greatest possible objection to anything of the sort; next he cut off a large angle equal to a quarter of a mile, by trespassing up Squire Cracklow's carriage road, and boring through his young plantation into the Burtreeford turnpike, which latter, however, he quickly forsook for a pet line of gates through Mr. Blatherwick's farm, then past the Punch Bowl Inn, through Thurlestone fivelanes to the little village of Barrymore at the foot of the downs, whose ascent he then made by the zig-zag road up the sides, passing up into an entirely different region to the one they had left—wild, open, undulating downs, with nothing but plovers and tinkling-belled sheep to disturb the serenity of the scene. Billy Rough'un then applied himself vigorously to the sound turf, and went snorting and cantering away in evident enjoyment of the change, accompanied by little Merrylegs, who seemed equally pleased.

Having thus opened their pipes by some three-quarters of a mile gallop, the Jug looked at his fat watch, and finding they were in plenty of time, the friends pulled up just as Jonathan appeared with his hounds on the brow of the opposite hill, attended by farmers Brushfield and Jacobstow, all straining their eyes and wondering who the deuce these strangers could be. As they approached, Jonathan saw it was the Jug, whereupon he gave his old sugar-loaf shaped cap an upward poke off his brow, and said he hoped Mr. Jovey Jessop was well.

"Quite well," replied the Jug, "thank you;" adding, "you'd better come and dine with us after hunting and see."

"*Humph!*" grunted Jonathan, "what time does he feed?"

"Six thirty," replied the Jug, "six thirty to a minute."

"Dinner!" exclaimed Jonathan, raising his eye-brows, "sooner, I should say."

"Get an omelette soufflée," added the Jug, recollecting his own order.

"What'nt a thing's that?" asked the master of harriers, erecting his great whip like a column on his leg.

"Come and see," said the Jug.

"No-r, batter puddin', if you like," muttered Jonathan, after a pause; "batter puddin' if you like, but none of your messes."

Up then came the old customer, Cordey Brown, with his spurs in his hat, thinking nobody would know he had gone out to hunt, followed by Jack Pole, Billy Brickworth, and Tom Tadford, the tippling farrier, who has lain overnight at the sign of the Punch Bowl, and has very much the appearance of one himself. All are either dressed in green coats or the dark clothes and strong lower garments of men bent on defying the united attacks of weather and woods. There was nothing like a white top-boot, let alone a pair of white cords amongst them. A hunt was what they wanted and came for.

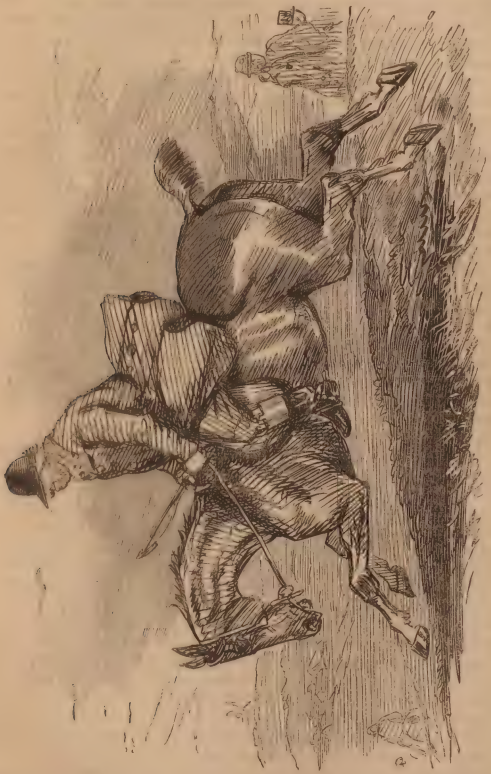
Jonathan's, like Jovey's, was quite a working establishment, nothing for show or appearance. But Jonathan, unlike Jovey, was a queer morose sort of chap, who could be extremely disagreeable when he liked. If one of the over riding red coats was to tell Jonathan he had seen the hare pass through a gap or a gate, Jonathan would immediately hold the hounds the opposite way, muttering something about it had most likely been a cat. Not that anybody ever was rash enough to come out with Jonathan in red; but he had a certain instinctive knowledge of those who wore it, and always dreaded their jealous rivalry and rushing for a start.

"Bad word it, sir!" he would exclaim. "Do you think I'd bring out these sixteen couple of beautiful arriers if I wanted you to catch the ar? Do, please, hold hard whilst they try to make it out, or at all events get off your horse and put your nose to the ground yourself. Now for our particular day."

Time being up, and all the field come or accounted for, and Cordey Brown having unbagged and buckled on the clandestine spurs, Jonathan now moved his beautiful hounds to a few acres of fallow on the right of the rubbing post, whose depth of soil had been too much for the farmer to resist, and ere he had gone half over the ground up started puss, with a flounce that sent the sandy soil up into the air, looking as terrified as an old maid when a man offers to shake hands with her without his glove on.

Away she scuttled at best pace, every hound in full view, gaining upon them, and looking as if she would leave her competitors immeasureably in the lurch. A patch of gorse on the brow of the hill hid her from further view and brought the late screeching pack fairly to their noses. There was a good scent with which they swept

down in a cluster into the vale, and rose the opposing hill with undiminished dash. Meanwhile the field went coolly and fairly away,



all except the Jug, who was borne impetuously along by the over-anxious, boring Billy Rough'un. Getting him down into the bottom,

however, with a fine grassy slope in front, the Jug eased him out gently, and ere Billy reached the top the Jug had the satisfaction of feeling his impetuosity gradually subside, when, giving him a touch of the spur, as much as to say, "Come, old boy, we are not done yet," he at length landed him on the top of the rising ground, with every apparent disposition to be quiet. The Jug then held back a little for Jonathan Jobling and his tail to come up, when falling into the ruck, Billy Rough'un and he went sailing along very comfortably together, along the brow of Lingfield hill, past Silverdown quarry, over Pole-star peak by Brockenden barn, sinking the hill, and so down into the enclosures of the vale below. These were large and roomy, and puss having traversed the first, a field of seeds, diagonally swerved to the left, and after making a Gordian knot, finally threw herself with a surprising bound into a ragged boundary fence between Bickington and Fittiss's farms, composed of the usual confusion of brushwood, dead wood, old harrows, and anything.

The pace having been severe, and the return pretty sure, several of the field, the fat one in particular, pulled up and sat mopping themselves on the side of the hill, from whence a secure view of the further performance was obtained; but Jonathan, as in duty bound, went skating down the steep side followed by the Jug, Mr. Bunting, and such others as felt sure their steeds could get up again. The hare had now puzzled the pack, and there was nothing for it but patience and letting them try to make it out for themselves.. So Jonathan having pulled up at a respectful distance, sat shading his eyes from the sun, watching their bustling anxiety, but inability to proceed.

At length they had so foiled the ground that it was no use letting them persevere any longer, and there was nothing for it but to help them. So, advancing and passing through the familiar gap, he made a forward cast to be certain she was not on, and then returned to belabour the hedge, when a very few cracks of the great whip sent her flying out of her form, one ear flobbing one way the other another, looking as if she didn't know which leg to put first. Having recovered her surprise, she presently got into her stride, and went bowling away to the joy of the hill siders, and the excitement of the pack, who strained every nerve as before. Jonathan hugged his great horse Humpty Dumpty, and went labouring after them, grinning with delight at the feat. Billy Rough'un, too, dropped quietly on his bit, and took the enclosures as if conscious he would have to contend with the hills. Nor was Billy out in his reckoning, for the hare now treated the field to a turn round the base of Bossington hill, and then regained the downs by the gorge between it and the Chapel, when, getting breath, she again scuttled along the brow of the general range of undulating hills, the now re-united field following the pressing pack with every demoustration of joy and delight. Foremost went Jobling, grinning and hugging his horse in a high state of enthusiasm at the round he was giving the red-coats,

hoping Mr. Boyston would see the marvellous hits of old Lavender, and appreciate the guidance of Leader. On, on they went, all plain sailing and smooth, nothing to hinder or distract the attention, no asking the way over Bartnaby bog, no offering of Huggins to hold Wiggins's horse while he pulled out a gap or opened a gate for the rest.

At length, on passing Barricane barn, puss met with an impediment. Tom Hollowjaw's, the shepherd poacher's stump-tailed lurcher, Teaser, turned her, and but for the deficiency of helm would in all probability have killed her. As it was he got a mouthful of fur, and sent her flying down Banfield footway instead of pursuing her easier line along the brow of the hill. This greatly aggravated her discomfort, already sufficiently taxed by the vehement clamour of her pursuers behind. Still, like Jovey Jessop's Brushwood Banks fox, she had been hunted before, and did not despair of escaping again. So she exerted herself to the utmost, and speeding along put as much space between herself and her followers as ever she could. Thus she traversed Towlsworthy Hill, dipped into Watergate Valley, and again made for higher ground on Warleighworth Wold. Still the cry of the hounds and the cheer of the fat huntsman pursued her, and made her wish for a friend to relieve her. There were plenty of hares if one would but get up—plenty of hares if one would but get up! But alas! no friend was by.

The fox is always supposed to be a gentleman, and the hare a lady; and though the sexes are sometimes transposed, the terms remain the same, and exercise a considerable influence in the chase. The fox is pursued with a vehement ardour, if not an inveterate hatred; everybody has something to say against him—while a little turnip nibbling and wheat cropping is about the worst that can be laid to the charge of poor puss.

Still a hare takes a deal of hunting, especially on a bad scenting day, and those who have been at the trouble of unravelling her steps, watching the working of Lilter and Tilter and Wonderful, don't like to be baulked of their prize in the end, even though they are regardless after they have got it. On the present occasion, with two strangers out, of course it would not do to be beat, and Jonathan worked with assiduous care. All the field, too, were careful, each man feeling his credit involved in the performance of the pack.

Our hare, which was a buck and a stout one, had now done the field good service. She had given them a very pretty lead out, or rather round, of some two miles in the first instance, one in the second with a straight shoot out, and a curve for the third. Though the hounds flew over the downs, they made it out tolerably well on the fallows, their merry sterns twinkling when they would hardly trust their tongues to say the scent was there. At length a chalky fallow brought them studiously to their noses, and Jonathan, feeling that killing time was come, crept gently on, to be ready to save her in the

last extremity. The field followed their great leader's example, many of them looking alternately at the hounds and the Jug's stolid unappreciative countenance. The pace gradually slackened until the hounds almost stopped upon the drab fallow.

Jonathan now drew rein, and sat transfixed. He was sure she was somewhere there. Humpty Dumpty presently gave himself a hearty shake, when up bounced puss right under his nose, and with a desperate effort to gain the opposite hedgerow, twisting and turning from her numerous open-mouthed pursuers, was finally snapped by Mariner, over whom Jollity and Jovial immediately rolled, when the whole pack poured in like bees at a hive, and the kill was complete.

Jonathan was amongst them in the twinkling of an eye, and from a ground worry the scene changed into a high in air trophy with the glad pack baying and jumping and pawing the stout British yeoman.

"Who-hoop!" holloaed Jonathan, with a voice that made the hills echo.

"Who-hoop!" responded Cordy Brown, from the thick of the field.

"*Well hunted!*" cried Telford, who paid his subscription in flattery.

"Deuced well!" assented Brickworth, mopping his brow.

"Five-and-fifty minutes!" announced Pole, who was time-keeper to the hunt.

Jonathan, having duly exhibited his victim, now proceeded to disembowel her and give his favourites a taste of her blood; after which, having got his hands licked pretty clean, the herculean huntsman advanced to the Jug with the hare in his hand, saying, "You were good enough to ax me to dine off a scoffla—but scofflas are not in my way—but if you'd accept a hunted hare, I shall be very glad to give you her," holding the hare up to the Jug as he spoke.

"Thank you," said the Jug, taking her and fastening her into Billy Rough'un's hunting martingal.

"And make my compliments to Mr. Jessop," continued Jonathan, helping him.

"I will," said the Jug.

"No better sportsman than Mr. Jessop," continued Jonathan, thinking unless it were himself.

"Well, now, we are going to Somerslease Hill," continued he, when they had got the hare adjusted. "There we shall find another stout 'un, get on to fresh ground, and have another good gallop."

"I think I must be going home," replied the Jug, adding, "I'm going to ride this horse with the fox-hounds to-morrow."

"So," said Jonathan. "Well, then, sir, I'll bid you good morning," tendering him his still rather blood-stained hand as he spoke.

The Jug shook it and said "good morning," too.

Jonathan then hoisted his great sternpost into the saddle, and, calling his handy hounds together, proceeded onwards, leaving our friends to journey home in the contrary direction.

CHAPTER LXXX.

PRIVETT GROVE AGAIN.

"WONDER where we are," now observed Mr. Bunting, looking about him, as their mutually receding steps soon put a wide space between our friends and the field.

"I know," replied the Jug. "This is Okers Over; that (nodding to a little hamlet embedded among large bare-branched trees beneath the shelter of a swelling hill) is Bluemeadows; at the back of it we get upon Bleakendale edge, and can either go home by the road or the fields, whichever you like."

"My name's 'easy,'" replied Mr. Bunting; adding, "I suppose there's nothing to do before dinner?"

"Nothing, unless you'll like to go to the kennel and look over the hounds."

"No—no; not in my way," rejoined our hero; "that's an old-fashioned proceeding," added he.

"Well, then, we'll just saunter quietly home by the road," rejoined the Jug, dropping the reins on the neck of the now subdued Billy Rough'un, and diving into his side-pocket for the conversation-stopping weed. He presently had a large Lopez cigar, blowing a cloud round his harvest-moon face. The two then jogged on quietly together through Filterton, Swimingdale, and the little villages of Lofield and Upton. After passing the corn-mill the road rises over Warringborough Hill, and though no great hand at recognising a country, it somehow struck Mr. Bunting that he had seen this one before—stacks by a barn—chimneys among trees—it was very like the ground about Privett Grove.

"What place is that?" now asked he, trotting his horse up alongside Billy Rough'un.

"That," rejoined the Jug, "that," repeated he, with his usual careless indifference, "that's what's-its-name—where the widow with the pretty daughter lives."

"Thought so," said Mr. Bunting, gaily.

"What, do you know them?" asked the Jug.

"A little," replied Mr. Bunting, "a little."

"Suppose we call," suggested the Jug.

"With all my heart," replied our hero.

"If you know them well, I can take you a short cut to the stables

through the fields," said the Jug, pointing to a weak place in the hedge they were passing, where the hoof marks of a horse were still visible—this being one of the Jug's short cuts to cover.

"Perhaps we may as well go the front way," observed Mr. Bunting, our hero knowing that ladies do not like to be taken by surprise.

"P'raps we may," assented the Jug, thinking to finish his cigar. So saying he passed the place and plodded on to the gate. "This is the way in," said he, opening and pushing it back, as if his companion was a perfect stranger to Privett Grove. The Jug then, having thrown his cigar-end away, produced a black pocket-comb, and, uncovering his bristles, proceeded to give them and his stubbly whiskers a good stirring up. He then ridded the comb out and offered it to our friend, who, however, preferred giving his curls a run through with his fingers to availing himself of it. So the Jug pocketed it without further to do. This performance brought them to the diverging road to the stables, which the Jug, pointing out, said, "Shall we put our horses up and go in, or how?"

"Better go up to the house and inquire if they are at home, which will give the ladies time to put on their best bibs and tuckers."

"Well," said the Jug, turning Billy Rough'un's head up the road. The horses then paced quietly on, wondering what was going to happen. The "invisible guardian" of the house saw the approaching guests and gave the alarm ere the vociferous door-bell responded to the hearty summons of the Jug. He pulled as if he would pull the knob out of the socket.

The difference of the sexes is strikingly shown in the matter of visitors. Ladies are always at home to them; gentlemen, never. As soon as the bell sounds, the ladies whip away their uncompany-like work, and after glancing at themselves in the mirror, subside into a company posture; while the gentlemen hurry away to intercept the servant, and whisper lowly but vehemently "*not at home*" as he passes. Sometimes, indeed, the excommunicating order is general and positive—"never at home to any one;" while the exceptional guests of the ladies are few and far between. Of course we are speaking of middle life, one servant being quite uncqual to exclude or to carry in the card of a caller in high life—there must be a shoal of them there to do that.

Our old friend John Thomas, in well-put-on clean stockings and neatly-stringed shoes, smiled as he opened wide the door for admission; whereupon the Jug, who was better pleased with Billy Rough'un, said, "if Mr. Bunting would give him his horse, he would take them round to the stable and get them some gruel;" so saying he laid hold of Merrylegs' bridle and trudged away to the diverging road he had coveted before. Arrived at the stable, with the aid of Old Gaiters he got what he wanted, and having thrown a sheet over each horse, he returned to the front door, where he found the footman waiting to

receive him. Following his guide, he presently made the head-foremost descent into the drawing-room that our hero had done on a former occasion. Indeed he did worse, for he almost landed in Mrs. McDermott's lap, who was contemplating her daughter and Mr. Bunting as they sat upon the sofa—wondering if he was to be any "thing more" to her or not, and all that sort of thing. "Oh dear, that door!" exclaimed she, as the Jug recovered himself after his stumble; "oh dear, that door! wish we could devise some means of curing it—it is so disagreeable making such a sudden descent."

"It is," said the Jug, who now felt the full effect of the truism.

Miss Rosa then came forward to greet our unaffected friend, after which they all got into places again, and the chirp of conversation was presently renewed—surprised at seeing them together—supposed they had been hunting—harriers, and so on.

Cake and wine presently made its appearance, and were placed on the table, whereupon the Jug, after a good steady stare at the cut-glass decanter, arose from his chair, and, helping bumpers all round, proceeded to distribute them—one to Mamma, one to Miss, one to Mr. Bunting, and, of course, one to himself. The ladies looked at theirs, Mr. Bunting sipped at his, but the Jug, after ruminating over a good mouthful, finally swallowed it, and then took off the rest at a gulp.

"Good wine," said he to Mrs. McDermott, nursing the glass on his knee, as if he meant to have another—"good wine! McKinnel's, I should say," smacking his thick lips.

"No, it is some I have had in the house a long time," replied Mrs. McDermott, with a sigh; whereupon the Jug, seeing he had touched a wrong chord, helped himself to another glass, which very soon went the same way as the first one. Still he sat with his empty glass on his knee, as though he might be tempted to fill it again.

"Won't you take a little cake?" now asked Mrs. McDermott, inclining her hand towards it.

"Thank you," replied the Jug—"thank you, I will presently," then, recollecting himself, he added, "Won't you take a little, Mam?"

Mrs. McDermott declined, so did Miss Rosa, and Mr. Bunting, who was making play on the sofa, would not take any either.

The Jug then, after a pause, looked first at the cake, then at the wine, then at his feet, and finally rising, helped himself to a good thick slice of cake.

"Good eating requires good drinking," observed he to Mrs. McDermott, as he helped himself to another glass of wine, and then resumed his seat by her side.

"So it does," assented Mrs. McDermott, "and hunting makes people hungry."

"Very," replied the Jug, munching away at the cake.

"Mr. Jovey Jessop is very fond of hunting, I suppose," said she.

"Very," replied the Jug.

"I wonder he doesn't get married," observed Mrs. McDermott, "he would be much more comfortable with a wife, I should think."

"*Humph* — don't know that," thought the Jug, taking a liberal mouthful of wine.

"Plenty of elegant, accomplished girls in the world," observed Mrs. McDermott, looking at her daughter.

"No doubt," replied the Jug—"no doubt," adding, after a pause, "only, for my part, I don't know but I would rather have a wife that could set a good dinner on the table than one that could talk Greek."

"Well, but she might do both," observed Mamma.

"Seldom," replied the Jug—"seldom—all go for show—happy medium's the thing—happy medium's the thing," finishing the contents of his glass as he spoke.

Mamma then lowered her voice, and a subdued confidential conversation ensued between her and the Jug, which greatly facilitated Mr. Bunting's approaches to the daughter. He felt that he got on better with her than he had done since the Pic Nic at Roseberry Rocks. He almost thought he might offer.

The friends were so comfortable that each waited for the other to give the hint to rise, and if the premature shades of one of those short winter days that appear so impossible in the fine long drawn ones of summer had not begun to obscure the room, there is no saying but they might have sat over the dinner-hour at Appleton Hall. The Jug's inward monitor, however, coinciding with the waning day, caused him to haul up his great warming-pan of a watch, when dangling it by its jack-chain, he asked his companion if he knew what o'clock it was? Of course—"With her conversing," Mr. Bunting had forgotten "all time," and was perfectly astonished when he was told what it was, but there was no gainsaying the fact, or that they had sat quite long enough for a call—so the Jug rising, and helping himself to another glass of sherry *en passant*, asked permission to ring the bell for the horses.

And now, while they are bringing them, we will retrograde a little, and tell how Miss Rosa came to be in a more affable humour than usual.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE NEW BONNET.

The day after our hero's former visit to Privett Grove, Mrs. McDermott thought it her duty to go to Mayfield and tell Mrs. Goldspink what had happened. They had been such old friends, and the young people had always been so intimate, that she would not like Mrs. Goldspink to hear of anything likely to affect her daughter's happiness from any one but herself. At the same time she could not go open-mouthed as though she thought they had achieved a great triumph, but just drop in in a quiet neighbourly way and broach the subject carelessly in the course of conversation.

People wanting to see the real essence of diplomacy should watch two discreet matronly ladies trying to outwit one another. They approach with all the caution of chess-players, and go quite as much upon looks as they do upon words. It is here that the people who dabble in ink shed fail. They can't see the effect of their observations, insinuations, aggravations—or whatever they indulge in. It is no uncommon thing to hear ladies say, "I would give anything to see So-and-so's face when she reads this," which shows the importance they attach to a view. Of course the invading party has the advantage, being ready primed for the occasion, with plenty of time for conning and calculating contingencies, and considering what they shall say if things take an unexpected turn. Upon this sort of mission Mrs. McDermott proceeded to visit her good friend Mrs. Goldspink.

As the weather was cold, and Miss Rosa now worked her white pony severely, Mrs. McDermott drove into Mayfield in her brougham, Gaiters assuming a gaudy, many-buttoned, livery-coat for the purpose of piloting the ewe-necked mare, who looked much better in harness than she did when under the saddle. Of course Mrs. McDermott did not drive direct to the object of her mission, but hovered about the market-place, calling at the tinner's, the glazier's, the butcher's, the baker's,—the bonnet-shop. Our watchful banker, however, was on the look on.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and sivin's twenty-one—here's Mrs. McD.," said our friend to himself, as through his little peephole in the bank window he saw her draw up and dart into the milliner's—"and sivin's twenty-eight—what a go it would be if she should happen to buy the bonnet Mrs. G.'s been barginin' for."

The visit to the bonnet-shop occupied more time than all the other calls put together, and "sivin and four" was interrupted in his peeping by a clerk coming in with a bill that he did not altogether approve of, for, though it had a good many names to it (Cordy Brown's among the number), there was not one that they were particularly fond of. So, after twisting, and turning, and considering it, the clerk at length returned with it from the little den, and passing behind the counter, handed it back to the old farmer who brought it, saying, "it was not quite convenient to do it just then."

"Wy, wy," replied the ancient, nothing daunted — "wy, wy—ar'll call again in hafe an oour or so."

Just as the clerk had got rid of the customer, the quiet rolling hum of a carriage was heard round the corner, which was quickly followed by a knock and a ring at the banker's front door.

"That's her!" said old Goldspink to himself, "that's her—let's see if she's got the new bonnet." So saying, he whipped up his clotty old pewter inkstand, and telling the junior clerk to replenish it, passed on through the bank into the parlour beyond, and was presently in command both of the street door and the house passage. He heard the quiet foot-fall of the maid, the opening of the front door, the enquiry and answer; saw the touch of the hat repetition at the brougham side, the turn of the plated-handle, and the falling open of the door—when out came a hat and feather.

"That's it! green with a bunch of tiger lilies inside" exclaimed he. "That's it! green with a bunch of tiger lilies inside! Was there ever such luck as that?" And our banker's heart smote him when he remembered how he had advised Mrs. Goldspink to hold off, thinking to get the hat for something less than was asked.

Meanwhile Mrs. McDermott, very well pleased with her purchase, followed the maid up stairs, thinking that in all probability the discussion would open with a dissertation on the new head gear. But Mrs. Goldspink, who had seen the brougham meandering about the market-place and finally draw up at Mrs. Muslin's, had her misgivings as to what might happen, and a very hasty glimpse as Mrs. McDermott alighted confirmed her worst fears. If Mrs. Muslin hadn't got two bonnets exactly alike, which was not probable, she really believed Mrs. McDermott had bought hers. However she would soon see.

"Please, Mam, Mrs. McDermott," now announced Sairey the maid, ushering the visitor into the low heavy-ceilinged apartment of the old house; whereupon Mrs. Goldspink, though perfectly aware who was coming, arose and greeted her with well-feigned surprise. She was "so glad" to see her—"quite charmed"—and thereupon she gave her a second squeeze, and then backed her down into an indifferently stuffed easy chair. Sure enough there was the coveted bonnet, looking all the more tempting from now being in the possession of another.

"Well and how are all here?" asked Mrs. McDermott.

"Pretty much as usual—pretty much as usual," a something swelling in Mrs. Goldspink's throat that nearly choked her. "How's Rosa?"

"Oh, Rosa's quite well—Rosa's quite well—had an unexpected visit from a gentleman she met at Roseberry Rocks."

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Goldspink, wondering if her visitor had bought the new bonnet to come and tell her of it in. However, she would not gratify her vanity by asking her any questions either about the beau or the bonnet. Coming in this sort-of-way looked rather like adding insult to injury, and Mrs. Goldspink was not a lady to be put upon. If Mrs. McDermott did not know Jasper's worth, she did, and there was no occasion for any cubservicncy to her. Let Rosa take the gentleman she had met at Roseberry Rocks if she liked.

So contenting herself with the simple "Indeed," she rose and rang for the conversation-stopping cake.

Mrs. McDermott was fairly posed; baffled upon two points, either of which would be enough to engage the undivided attention of most women. What could it mean? Somebody must have told. Her evil genius Mrs. Simey—that woman was always thwarting her. She would sound Mrs. Goldspink on the subject. "Had she seen their friend Mrs. Simey lately?"

No; Mrs. Goldspink hadn't seen her she didn't know when—certainly not since the autumn.

Then thought Mrs. McDermott it will be Mrs. Wedderburn; and she immediately transferred her stock of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness to her. Had Mrs. Goldspink seen Mrs. Wedderburn lately?

No; she hadn't seen her either.

Mrs. McDermott was posed, for she could not think of any one else who owed her a good turn. So she sat mute, wondering what it meant. At length she took her departure, feeling assured that Jasper had fallen in with some one he liked better than Rosa, and thinking it was fortunate Mr. Bunting had come down. So the reader will understand the favourable circumstances under which our hero paid his second visit to Privett Grove.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE RIDE HOME.

The reader will now understand how it was that Mr. Bunting felt he had made greater progress with Miss Rosa than he had done upon any recent occasion. The bonnet had stood his best friend, though the Jug had certainly contributed to his success. While our hero was plying his softest soft nonsense into Miss Rosa's ear, the Jug was sherrying and enunciating some very comfortable domestic platitudes into "Mamma's," whom he inwardly settled was a very sensible, agreeable woman. He would be (sip) bound to say (sop) that (sip) lady would make a steady respectable man very (sop) comfortable—what nice sherry it was (gulph)—dare say'd she would have some port to correspond. The house too was very nice, barring the down step into the drawing-room. Where two could dine, three could dine (sip)—certainly capital sherry; and so the Jug with more gumption than he seemed to possess, proceeded to glance at the question of amalgamation,—Boyston Park, Appleton Hall horses, boot jack, picture and all. He didn't see why it shouldn't do. This double intercourse going on, it was not to the interest of either party to move an adjournment, and if the day had not done it for them, there is no saying how long they might have sat. Even the Jug's "scoffla" might have been forgotten. At length, premature evening came to the rescue, and hinted that they ought to be going home.

However parties may watch one another, and think they read their feelings by their eyes, there is one proceeding that completely baffles them, namely, the amount of fervour put into the squeeze of the hand at parting. Without going into particulars, we may say that both our friends mounted their horses, each perfectly satisfied with the result of the visit. The Jug was even gay, and tried to strike up a tune as he jogged Billy Roughun down the carriage drive on to the road.

"Nice ladies," said he, stooping to unlatch the gate, and swinging it open for our friend to follow.

"*Very*," replied Mr. Bunting with an emphasis.

"No idea that you knew them," observed the Jug reining up alongside our friend. "No idea that you knew them. Have you ever been in this country before?"

"No," replied our friend; "I met them in the summer at Roseberry Rocks."

"Ah, I heard they were away somewhere," observed the Jug, adding, "I didn't know where it was."

"It was there," rejoined Mr. Bunting; and having given his companion this piece of information, he thought to have a little out of him in return. "Tell me," said he, jerking his head back at it as he spoke, "is that place their own?"

"No; rented," replied the Jug, seeing the point.

"*Hem!*" mused Mr. Bunting, doubting whether it was safe to go further with his inquiries. The Jug might tell Mamma, and that would not do.

The Jug then lighted a large Manilla cigar, and proceeded to fumigate his face, until he arrived at the first of a series of gaps by which he sought to lessen the distance to Appleton Hall, by a diagonal cut across country. Farmer Grufton, however, had anticipated the movement by making up the introductory gap in a more summary way than is usual in the middle of a hunting season.

"Rot the fellow!" exclaimed the Jug, halting before it, and looking at the stout perpendicular post with its strong interlacings of black thorn and white.

"Rot the fellow! he deserves to have a fresh hole bored in every rood of his fence," repeated the Jug, putting Billy Rough'un close up to the place, and trying to pull the post out with his hand as he sat. It was too firmly driven in for that.

"I'll have it out," said he, dismounting and handing his horse to our hero.

The Jug then ascended the little mud bank, and after a series of struggles and wrestles, succeeded in drawing the post from its place. "Nasty unhandsome behaviour," said he, knocking the other impediments out of the way as he spoke. "Nasty unhandsome behaviour; I nearly broke my neck in making this gap, and now he seeks to deprive me of the fruits of my labour."

The road being now clear, the Jug resumed Billy Rough'un, and leading him over the gap, remounted with the post over his shoulder.

"What are you going to do with it?" now asked our hero.

"I'll put it where they won't get it again," replied the Jug, rousing Billy Rough'un into a canter with a touch of the spur, and threading a variety of fences with a knowledge of outlets that was perfectly astonishing. Whenever Mr. Bunting thought they were irrecoverably pounded, the Jug solved the mystery with a swerve or a turn to some heretofore invisible opening. So they proceeded from fallow to pasture, from pasture to seeds, from seeds among turnips, in a sort of hands-across-and-back-again, down-the-middle-and-up-again dance of agricultural variety.

At length they approached a few cottages, in the little garden attached to one of which was a red-cloaked old woman gathering kindling wood from the fence.

"There, old girl!" cried the Jug, chucking the post over the hedge to her as he spoke—"There! there 's something to make the pot boil."

"Thank you, sir," cried the woman, hurrying to take it up, thinking what a fine fire it would make for the evening. "Thank you, sir," repeated she as she clutched it.

"Shan't be troubled with that again," observed the Jug, now swinging back a very ricketty gate leading on to a very rutty road.

They kept its course for some half mile, when squeezing through a ragged belt of fir plantation, and availing themselves of a fallen place in the haw haw, the Jug "whoayed" Billy Rough'un as he got upon grass, and looking back, asked our hero if he knew where he was.

"Not the slightest idea," replied Mr. Bunting, looking around.

"Home," said the Jug, pointing to the stable lights twinkling in front.

"Who 'd have thought it!" rejoined Mr. Bunting.

"Nothing like knowing a country," observed the Jug.

"Nothing," assented Mr. Bunting, adding, "I shouldn't have thought we were half way there yet."

"Nor should we," replied the Jug, "if I hadn't pulled out that post;" adding, "It 's not fair after a man has been at the trouble of studying a country, and establishing his gaps, to stop him in that sort of way."

As our friends advanced over the green sward, the trod of horses' feet became more frequent, until the grass was altogether obliterated with the repetition of their hoofs as the line of march led up to the stables.

Entering the yard, the Jug gave one of his familiar holloas, which brought out as well Billy Button as the man who had the charge of Little Merrylegs.

Having taken the hare from the saddle, and given his orders for the morrow, the Jug led the way into the house by the same way as he had introduced Mr. Bunting on his first arrival.

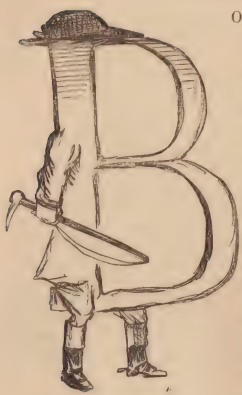
"Anybody dine here?" asked he, as he met a footman in the passage leading into his bed-room.

"Yez-ir, Mr. Gurney Busbey does."

"Oh, does he?" replied the Jug; "then we shall want an anchovy toast," which meant a second bottle of port, Gurney Busbey being one of the gentlemen against whom it was the Jug's office especially to provide, and very ready he was so to do. So Busbey and Boyston had their bottle a-piece of Hutton's thirty-four port, while Mr. Jessop and our hero sipped their quiet bottle of Latour, and all arose apparently equally sober. And the Jug having at length seen his companion buttoned into his booby hutch, retired to his bed-room to rock in his chair, con over the events of the day; and about three o'clock in the morning, he returned a mental verdict to himself, that he "might do a great deal worse than"—the reader knows what. So saying, he off with his nankins and turned into bed.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

BRANFORTH BRIDGE.



OOTS and breeches again! What boys for boots and breeches! Here is Mr. Jovey Jessop all red and yellow, all hurry and confusion, as keen as if he had never seen a fox or a hound in his life. Here is the old hot and heavy Jug, too, red up to the crown; and here, too, is Mr. Bunting very smart and orthodox, moving leisurely about as an easy going exquisite ought to do. It will not be a hunt that will put Mr. Bunting out of his way.

"Horse on?" (munch, slunch, munch), asks Mr. Jessop with his nose well down to the porridge plate.

"Ride him myself," grunts the Jug, trudging away to the well supplied plate-warmer at the fire for some kidneys.

"Take Mr. (slunch, munch) Bunting then with me," observes Mr. Jessop, who is going on wheels.

"Thank you," replies our hero, now falling too with his breakfast to be ready in time.

Munch, crunch, sip, sop, sup, was then the order of the day varied by occasional exclamations of tea! toast! egg! or whatever the party wanted, a footman hovering round the breakfast-table to supply all rising demands on the instant.

Mr. Jessop was done first—"Ten minutes!" exclaimed he, rising and looking at his watch as he wiped his mouth, and threw his napkin away; "Ten minutes if you please," repeated he, hurrying out of the room.

"Sharp's the (munch, crunch) word here," observed the Jug, labouring away at the beef-steak and fried potatoes.

"So it seems," replied Mr. Bunting, putting on a little more steam.

"Never knew (crunch) Jessop late in my (munch) life," observed the Jug, filling his useful mouth full of muffin.

"By the (munch, crunch) way, you'll not forget my (crunch, munch), boot jack," observed he, looking up at Mr. Bunting.

"Oh no, I've laid it on the toillette table to be ready to bring down."

"Thank ye," replied the Jug, adding, "I nearly lost it one day by lending it to a friend, whose groom would insist that it belonged to his master's dressing-case, and was walking away with it under his arm when I met him."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Bunting, thinking it would have been no great matter if he had lost it.

"Rather a neat (munch, crunch) article," observed the Jug between mouthfuls.

"Well, yes, no, middling," replied Mr. Bunting from out of his tea cup—"the fact is," said he, setting the empty vessel down, "I don't know, but it would be better without the fold—the joint you know."

"Why, so?" asked the Jug.

"The fact is, I have rather a fleshy frog, and it nipped me as I stood upon it."

"Ah, well it bit me that way too once," replied the Jug; "but that was because I hadn't my (crunch) slipper on—should put your (munch) slipper on when you draw off your (crunch) boot."

The clank of a spur followed by the crack of a whip now sounded in the entrance-hall, and just at the moment a quick stepping bay whisked round with the dog-cart, and pulled up at the front door.

"Now then! time 's up!" cried Mr. Jessop; and in rushed a footman to announce that "master was ready."

"Well, then, adieu for the present," said Mr. Bunting to the Jug, as he rose to obey the summons, and investing himself in a roomy Napoleon gray overcoat, he put on his hunting-cap, and was presently by his host's side in the vehicle. The groom leaving hold of the horse's head, at a "twit" from our master, after a half-pretence of a rear, the gallant bay shouldered the collar, and started away at the rate of ten miles an hour. Knowing that he would cool down of his own accord, Mr. Jessop just let him go, and after bowling through the Park, they shot past the dilapidated lodges, and got upon the newly-metalled Fillingdale road. The velocity gradually subsided, and quartering, and easing, and picking the way became the order of the day. So they proceeded, jolting and laughing, overtaking horsemen presenting various indications of the chase, one with spurs to his leather-leggings, another with a fine Malacca cane whip-stick in his hand, a third with an entire whip; then a man in mufti all but a

hunting-cap, and presently the knowing, well-dressed grooms, jogging on by ones, by twos, and by threes. All touched or took off their hats to our master as he passed.

The bridge stands obliquely over the broad impetuous Wheetlade, presenting a pleasing feature from whichever end it is approached. Belonging to two counties, the surveyors of each exercise their ingenuity in making their respective ends as different as possible, the arches of one being of thirty, the other of fifty feet chord; while the wall and parapet of one is of coped rubble, and the other has an iron-railing fixed upon an indifferent ashlar one, to prevent drunken farmers and others shooting over the acute angle into the brawling river below. The bridge itself is on a liberal incline; and of course there is a toll-bar at the low end, presenting a substantial barrier to runaway horses, and causing many an objurgation from travellers on wheels, who expect to enjoy the benefit of the descent. Nothing annoys people so much as having to pull up to pay when they are cheating their horses into a belief that they have got nothing behind them.

Branforth bridge was not a very favourite meet for foxhunters, the general report of a day's sport from thence being, "We ran up the banks and down the banks;" but as the foxes liked the banks it was necessary to disturb them occasionally and drive them out into more popular quarters. Still it was a favourite place for the rising generation, and just at the season of the year when the schools had returned their valuable charges to their homes, it was sure, on a fine day like the present, to draw a considerable number.

Although Mr. Jovey Jessop did not, as we said before, affect lady-foxhunters, he was kind and encouraging to boys, who, besides placing under the particular care of his Jug, he always charged his servants to keep an eye upon, and to ride by such safe ways as would show them the most of a run. So he kept up his popularity with the Mammas who brought their smiling-faced boys on their ponies and in their pretty basket-carriages and confided them to his care, in the full confidence of getting them safe back again.

"Here we are now!" exclaimed Mr. Jovey Jessop, as the brow of Highford Hill brought them full above the circling river, with its well-wooded banks, marking its meandering course through the country. "Here we are!" repeated he, taking out his watch, and showing Mr. Bunting that it was seven minutes within time.

Two or three red coats, and two or three black coats, dotted the line, the wearers working their horses in the careful sort of way that denotes a ride on, but there was little to indicate a popular gathering.

"Well, but where are the hounds?" asked Mr. Bunting, thinking there was a great falling off in the field.

"The hounds are in the quarry," replied Mr. Jessop, and easing out his horse, he drove rapidly down the hill; but, instead of crossing the bridge, he turned short to the right, and trotting up a narrow lane,

entered a spacious whinstone quarry, that looked as if it could supply all the world with stone. Ow, wow, wow, went the joyful hounds, up went the hats and caps, smiles and greetings burst from all quarters. The large sheltered area of the quarry was alive with hounds, and horses, and carriages, and ponies—black, white, dun, roan, pie-bald, skew-bald—all the captivating colours, in fact. There was Mrs. Lob, with her large lustrous dark eyes fixed on her son, now sitting sideways on his skew-bald, whom she commends to the "*very great care*" of Mr. Jessop, begging that he will not let him ride over any five-barred gates, or dangerous places; there is Mrs. Honeybrook, sitting in her clothes-basket in the midst of her bevy of beauties equally energetic with regard to Albert Arthur, while Mrs. Eglantine begs that Mr. Jessop will see to sweet William, who is out with the hounds for the first time in his life. To all of whose injunctions, and to those of several others, Mr. Jessop replies that he will make a point of attending, and will place the boys under the care of Mr. Boyston as soon as ever he comes up. And scarcely are the words out of his mouth ere our red-hot friend is borne into the midst of the assemblage by the boring, teeth-grinding Billy Rough'un; and, the usual interchange of civilities or incivilities, such as "Well, Tom!" "Well, Jug!" "Well, old Quart Pot! how goes it?" and so on, over, Mr. Jessop, who has now mounted his horse, and sits in the midst of his hounds, exclaims, "I say, Boyston! here are three hundred and fifty thousand pounds worth of jewels looking round on the smiling faces as he spoke committed to your care; now will Mark and you take and ride them so as to show them as much of the run as you can, and keep them out of all scrapes?"

To which the Jug, who is a kindly-disposed man, and takes up with children as though he had some of his own, replies, "I will," whereupon Mrs. Lob and all the Mammas open upon him, each urging the claims of her innocent to extra care and protection, in the midst of which Mr. Jovey Jessop having moved first his hat to the ladies, then moves his hounds out of the quarry.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

A DAY FOR THE JUVENILES.

As usual the departure of the hounds operated like the bursting of a pent-up cataract; there was a general rush and hurry after them. First went the keen fustian and smock-frocked countrymen with their staffs, and their poles; then the anxious few-days-a-season-men, desirous of seeing as much as they could, next the easy-going regulars who despised the banks and were only out because it was a fine day, followed by a few second horsemen and the homeward bound grooms. Mr. Boyston was presently left alone in the quarry with the youngsters and their Mammas. Then there was a fresh appeal to his sympathies on behalf of Albert Arthur, sweet William, and others, each Mamma declaring she would be so much obliged to Mr. Boyston if he would look after her boy. Oh, she would be *so* much obliged!

Billy Rough'un, not being a horse that liked being left behind, very soon began fidgeting and turning tail to get after the hounds, so Mr. Boyston having assured the ladies that they might rest perfectly satisfied of the safety of their darlings, marshalled his forces as quickly as possible, saying, "Now, boys! follow me, and whatever you do, keep clear of the horses, for they often kick ponies when they wouldn't kick one another." So saying, he took off his hat to the ladies, and led the way out of the quarry, followed by the miniature field, the rear being brought up by some very sedate-looking family servants with large stomachs, large whips, and a great many large crest-buttons on their party-coloured coats. Then the ponies, like their riders, began showing which had a turn for the chase and which not, some ambling and curveting to get on, others plodding carelessly along, as though there was nothing particular astir.

It is strange how hunting runs in families, some boys taking to it quite naturally, others never having the slightest idea of anything of the sort. There is young Lob, for instance, so lively and gay, sitting quite at his ease, though his skew-bald pony is excited and keen, while Master Bowderoukins (nephew of our esteemed friend) has called in the aid of his roundabout red-vested man to see if he can't make his old brown pony go quicter, though it has no more life in it than a cow. Even little Eglantine, who is two years younger, and has never been out before, laughs at Bowderoukins, and asks if he is tired already. Joe Walker, who has been out hunting four

times, and is quite an old sportsman, holloas out, "Never say die!" as flourishing his right arm he trots past Bowderoukins, now busy eating a bun.

Mr. Boyston, meanwhile, looks them all over, thinking which will make sportsmen and which not.

"And what do you call your pony?" asks he of Lob, as the keen little animal darts up along side the great striding Billy Rough'un.

"Atalanta," replies Lob, swinging along quite at his ease.

"Rather fresh, isn't it?" asks Mr. Boyston, eyeing its impetuosity.

"I'll soon cure it of that," replies Lob, patting its arched neck—"wait till I get it upon grass."

"And what do you call your pony?" asks Mr. Boyston of little Honeybrook, as the latter on his white now draws up on Mr. Boyston's left.

"Lily of the Valley," replies the boy, pleased with the notice of the red-coat.

"Lily of the Valley," repeats Mr. Boyston—"Lily of the Valley—a very pretty name, and a very pretty pony too. Mind," added he, addressing himself conjointly to his companions—"mind you keep out of the crowd, and don't let your ponies touch the horses, and tell the other boys to do the same."

"I will," says Lob.

"And whatever you do, keep clear of the hounds—Mr. Jessop wouldn't lose one of those dogs if it was ever so."

"I will," says Lob, now turning his pony off the road for a probationary gallop up the grass-siding. Away went Lob, followed by Honeybrook, Walker, and two or three others.

"Come on! come on!" cries Mr. Boyston, looking back, and waiving his arm to little Bowderoukins, and others in the rear, to advance.

"Get on, Master Charles! get on, Master George!" urge the attendant servants, and forthwith there is extra exertion of elbows and legs, and the party press up towards the safe pilot.

"*Hold hard!*" now holloas Mr. Boyston to those in advance, and forthwith Lob and his tail pull up, and turning their ponies, take a return gallop towards him.

"*G-ently!*" cries Mr. Boyston, holding up his hand as they advance—"*g-ently!*" repeats he, as the hurrying boys try to outstrip one another. After shooting past a few paces, the racing-party pull up, and wheeling round, rejoin their companions, when the juvenile party is again complete.

Meanwhile Mr. Jessop having jogged on with the hounds, is now approaching the end of the little spinny which runs down into the banks. It is a nice warm sheltered place, with a variety of comfortable ambush, which our master always makes safe before drawing the wood. Hopping over a low fence, his gallant chestnut horse, Star of the West,

applies himself vigorously to the steep ascent as though he liked the exertion of climbing. Arrived at the top, the hounds dash eagerly into cover, dividing and spreading like a rocket. The field follow in long-drawn file, but Mr. Boyston recollecting that there is an awkward bottom to cross, halts his little party to the infinite mortification of Lob, who does not like leaving the hounds.

"This way, boys," cries Mr. Boyston, turning Billy Rough'un's head in quite a contrary direction to what the hounds are going—"this way, boys," and passing through a well-established gap, he rides them along Leawood Green, while the occasional cheer of the huntsman becomes fainter and fainter.

"But what shall we do if they find?" now asks Lob, anxiously, trotting up alongside of his leader.

"Oh, I'll soon catch them up," replies Mr. Boyston, jogging on.

Lob doesn't like it, and thinks they had much better stick to the hounds. That, however, he keeps to himself.

Mr. Boyston jogs on briskly, and presently making a short turn to the left, after pursuing the intricacies of a very devious cattle-track through some much mutilated brushwood, he suddenly pulled up on Pebble Ridge Hill with the panorama of the advancing pack coming down upon them.

"Here we are!" cried he, pointing them out to his party. Mr. Jessop's "*yoicks* wind him! *yoicks* push him up!" sounding most musically. So the steady hounds come sniffing here and there and everywhere for the scent, regardless alike of scuttling rabbits, and bouncing hares. Lob's eyes sparkle with pleasure, but little Bowderoukins dives into his overcoat-pocket, and fishes up a currant-bun, with which he commences regaling himself. Still the cry is "*yoicks* wind him! *yoicks* push him up!" varied with an occasional crack, which startles the wood-pigeons and scares an occasional pheasant. And now the steady drawing hounds are parallel with our juvenile party, and the sloping spinny inclines more determinedly to the river.

"Follow me, boys!" cries Mr. Boyston, again turning tail, and cutting away through a ricketty old gate on the left, he strikes down a very indifferent road, which, after two or three tortuous windings, brings him upon the alluvial soil of the fields next the river, just as Conqueror, Traveller, Whimsey, and Whipster round the expanding spinny, and enter upon the well-wooded banks above.

"Now you'll see everything," says Mr. Boyston, pointing to the spreading pack with Mr. Jessop and the body of the field riding on the high side of the cover.

Lob draws rein, and sits with eager eye viewing the gay speckled hounds ranging all over the banks; while Honeybrook and Walker propose a race up the field to the opposite gate, and Bowderoukins perseveres assiduously with his bun. There is pretty good lying, and Mr. Jessop gives his hounds plenty of time, never liking to hear

that he has left a fox behind, or that one had slipped away at one end of a cover just as he went out at the other.

And now a loud crack of Horneyman's whip reverberates through the clear atmosphere awakening the distant echoes; and ere its last notes have expired there is such an outburst of melody from the pack, that the horses are thrown into ecstacies, the ponies caper, and Atalanta darts at the bit as if it was determined to be off.

The fox has been snugly ensconced in an ivy-bush, high up in a crag, and came down with a sweep right before Pillager and Champion, and nothing but astonishment at the unwonted descent prevents them annihilating him. Prompter, and Prowler, and Hotspur, and Spanker, and Sportive, too, get a view, and the whole pack rush from their respective lines to join in the general outcry. Twenty couple of lately leisurely-taking-it hounds are thrown into a state of the most frantic excitement, and rush after the hardy old veteran of a fox in the most headstrong violent way. If he was to dash at an express train, or run into a red hot furnace, they would follow him. The twang of the horn, and the cheer of the huntsmen are drowned in the melody of the pack, and the glad party push on in the hopes that the fox will run up the banks, but not down the banks, as heretofore has been usual. Mr. Bunting is now quite at home on the Bold Pioneer, who is neither too fresh nor too stale, but just in that comfortably subdued state when a horse yields his wishes to his master, and canters merrily along, snorting, and clearing his pipes as he goes.

"Now, boys! look sharp!" cries Mr. Boyston, hugging the teeth-grinding Billy Rough'un, and getting in front of his party; "follow me," continues he settling himself in his great saddle, feet well home in the stirrups, and proceeding to pound up the gate-accommodating line of fields running parallel with the swiftly gliding river. The hounds are on their right hand, crashing and racing through the well-wooded banks, making the welkin ring with their melody. All operations are suspended at their coming. The birds in the air, the cattle in the field, the countrymen in the fold are all diverted from their pursuits. A magical influence pervades the air, heads are up and eyes are straining to the utmost to get a view of the fugitive.

Mr. Jessop shoots a-head in the stealing sort of way that so soon leaves a lagger in the lurch, and just gains the brow of Millerton Hill as the fox comes pacing up the green valley leading from the banks to Summercourt Dale, with two crows and a magpie hovering and wheeling on his line.

Our master claps spurs to the gallant Star of the West, and dropping his whip-thong as he goes, meets the fox full in the face at the accustomed turn by which he generally seeks to regain the banks, and with a tremendous crack and a "*hoop!*" sends him sailing away on to Farmanby Common, and so up to Rawdon Hill, and away towards Finglemoor Edge. This dexterous feat accomplished, a second or two

bring up the racing hounds, Fugleman and Firebrand racing for the lead—every hound throwing his tongue—and all in a fine widening phalanx. Away they race, with a breast-high scent. And now two distinct parties emerge from the banks, the one led by Horneyman, comprising the élite of the red coats; the other by the Jug, who being on the low side of the wood has lee way to recover, and comes tearing up a roughly stoned lane, spattering his little followers with the mud and *débris* of the surface as he goes.

"Now, boys, follow me!" exclaims he, standing in his stirrups and looking round on the party, as on rising the banks he sees the hounds are racing due north; adding, "and whatever you do, don't cross or touch other horses, for there are tailors who seek to conceal their incompetence by abusing boys." So saying, he again settled himself in his saddle, and went bucketing away, with the little ponies after him, in the extraordinary sort of way these little animals keep up with a horse. Thus he went hitting and holding and grinning and watching, running his mind's eye through all the familiar gaps and gates and nicks of the line.

"Hold hard!" now cries he, as Lob, who is a little in advance, puts Atalanta at a broken down fence over which the rest of the field have passed. "Hold hard!" cries he, turning short to the left, and throwing open the first of a series of gates leading up to Shillingham farm on the hill. Then seeing that Bowderoukins's Robin-red-breast has caught the gate for his young master, the Jug again sets sail, with Lob by his side, who asks him anxiously, "Why they don't keep with the hounds?"

"I'll show you," says the Jug, rather posed with the question. "I'll show you," says he; and after clattering along the field road and swinging open several more convenient gates, he at length passes right through farmer Sweetland's stack-yard, and presents his followers with a fresh smiling lapdscape, just as Sweetland's cur, having chased the fox, has brought the hounds to a stand-still on a large rough fallow two fields below the comfortable well-stocked homestead.

"There!" said the Jug, pointing triumphantly to the hounds, "there," said he, "you have them without risking your neck over the hedges and ditches."

"Well, but I like leaping," says Lob, stealing on and making for the hounds instead of waiting with the Jug to see which way they will go next. Little Albert Arthur follows Lob's example, but sweet William, Bowderoukins, and the rest remain with our deputy master, Mr. Boyston. Mark, Mr. Jovey Jessop's second horseman, then detaches himself from the miscellaneous group of servants, and trots gently on with an eye on the adventurous youths. Lob pulls up at a respectful distance from the field, and eyes Mr. Jessop's proceedings with his hounds, now casting them, now letting them alone. So he holds them round the south side of the large fallow—every

hound working his best, but unable to recover the scent. At length Trueman after a precautionary whimper drops his stern with a vigorous proclamation, and dashes at the neighbouring hedgerow as if he expected to find the fox in the middle of it. Life is again infused into the lately drooping pack, and impetuosity supplies the place of care. Horses and riders catch the enthusiasm, and there is a complete electrification of the whole. The hounds dash at the hedgerow, which bends and breaks with their weight. Mr. Jessop follows close on the tail ones, clearing the wattled fence and yawning ditch in his stride. Horneyman does the same, the next man breaks the witherings, the third displaces some cut and laid growers, while the fourth brushes all away together, and nearly reposes after a flounder in the broad black ditch beyond. His horse having at length extricated his hind legs and re-established himself on terra firma, to the great satisfaction of his rider, again sets sail, when the dread place has to be encountered by the remnants, many of whom go w-h-o-a-ing and cramcing, wishing themselves well over. That desirable feat accomplished by the next in rotation, he looks back and cries, "There's nothing to be afraid of!" so the succeeding man approaches it with increasing confidence, his young grey horse, however, throwing such an arch as apparently contradicts the assertion. Still, it is no time for turning; every man hurries his neighbour, either for the purpose of getting over or putting an end to his own fears.

"Now, Tomkins!" "Now, Jenkins!" "Now, Jones!" So they go at it, each man according to his own fashion; some straight, some sideways, some rushing, some creeping, some blundering clumsily. Now comes Lob, closely followed by little Arthur Honeybrook; and Lob, running his pony well at the place, comes over with a bucking bound that looks as if he was clearing a hedge instead of a ditch. Lily of the Valley then creeps down the ditch and up again; and Lob, seeing Arthur well landed, swerves to the left, and giving his pony its head up the grass, spurts past all the old drab-coated farmers and people, closely followed by the white. So they get to the gate at the tail of the red-coats. Grass succeeds grass, and a small transparent hedge dividing the next enclosures, the sportsmen spread in the independent sort of way peculiar to safety, each man taking the young fence in his line, and Lob flying over it like the rest of the field.

"Well done, young un!" cries Mr. Jovey Jessop, snatching a hasty backward glimpse from his now racing hounds. "Well done, young un!" repeats he, as Albert Arthur, with a less leap than Lob's, lands on the right side of the hedge too. "Where's Mr. Boyston?" cries Mr. Jessop, looking further back for the "magister curser" of his hunt. "Where's Mr. Boyston?" And echo answers, where? A similar return is made to an enquiry after the boy with the bun.

Our friends are now on Cherrytree Hill, with the hounds sweeping round its base, and a shepherd holding up his hat in the distance to

denote the line of the fox. The field are inside the semicircle, with a full view of the contesting energies of the pack; the rich-coloured

Hotspur now leading, now Famous, now Firebrand, now Pillager, the pace being too great for much music. So they sweep over the perennially green meadows up to the point indicated by the countryman. He has not headed him. On the contrary, being what they call a "slee chap," he dropped down into the ditch, when by the running of the sheep he saw the fox was coming, and had an uncommonly good stare as he passed through a meuse a little below where he was hid. He is a'most sure he's the varra fox that stole their turkeys i' the spring.

Countrymen always declare that a fox is dead beat, but upon the present occasion the shepherd was not far wrong in his assertion, for the fox having eat a very liberal late supper, is in no condition to

compete with Mr. Jovey Jessop's fleet stout-running hounds. The scent too is better than is convenient under the circumstances; and altogether, what with surprise at being whipped so unceremoniously out of his ivy-mantled tower, confusion at being stared full in the face by Mr. Jessop and driven from his point, together with not being able to make up his mind whether to shape his course for Chippendale woods or the craigs at Raven's Hill, he doesn't exactly know what to do. The cry of the hounds, and the cheer of the hunters, however, keep him going, for he feels it would never do to let them come up with him. So he travels on, trusting to beating them again as he has beat them twice before. Third time, however, they say, is catching time, and it is destined to be so on the present occasion. Steering an intermediate course between the craigs and the woods, he gets into a more populous neighbourhood—a country dotted with hamlets and small farmhouses, with their concomitant curs and other incumbrances. The further he advances the more he gets holloaed and viewed, until the whole country seems raised against him. The roads, too, run conveniently, and the clatter of the horses and the noise of the macadamites makes confusion worse confounded.

The Jug and Billy Rough'un are both in a high state of excitement, the Jug at having laid out of his ground by riding for Chippendale Woods, Billy Rough'un at being kept on the hard road when he wants to be racing in the fields alongside the musical hounds. The Jug has reduced the number of his small friends and increased that of his large ones; Bowderoukin's pony having peremptorily refused to risk its shins by passing over a tumble-down wall, while Lishman and Brisket of Pittville have turned up from nobody knows where—the "George and Dragon" at Crossfield, perhaps—and are long trotting in the loose stick-out-leg sort of way peculiar to butchers and drovers.

The Jug is red-hot; his face is as red as his coat. Billy Rough'un has bumped and shook him till he feels like a great dish of calves' feet jelly. What with the excitement of riding the wrong way, and then making up his lost ground, the excitement of being bullied for doing so, the excitement of looking after the youngsters, and the excitement of keeping Billy Rough'un in something like moderate subjection, the poor Jug is nearly overpowered. Added to this, he doesn't know but that young Lob and Arthur may have come to grief, for which he will be sure to get the blame. Pretty Mrs. Lob will never forgive him. Great is the relief to his mind as, on rising Dickering Hill, he sees the two boys careering away, near enough to the hounds, but yet clear of the crowd. The fox begins to run short, but the hounds turn as short as he does, and the Jug knows by experience that there will soon be an end of the same. So seeing a promising course of gates with a double fence in the distance, he boldly forsakes the road, resolved to be up at the end. His gallant tail follow suit, and there is presently a reunion of the field.

"Hillo, Green!" "Holloa, Brown!" "What, Smith! are you there?" proceed from the fieldites, who look at the roadsters much in the manner of hounds when a straggler comes up.

Mr. Bunting, who has been most comfortably carried by the Bold Pioneer, asks Mr. Boyston where he has been?

"Busy with the youngsters, busy with the youngsters," replies the Jug, leading his little troop outside the now halting horseman. The fox is now running so short, and the enclosures are so queer and cramped, that with a failing scent, it requires all Mr. Jovey Jessop's skill—science the fine writers call it—to keep the hounds on the line of the scent. The fox has evidently no idea which way he is going, running up Tommy Hoggin's potatoe field, down Mrs. Mason's pasture, and back over through farmer Fothergill's turnips. He has now lain down among the turnips, but mistrusting their flaccid security, he incautiously jumps up just as the hounds enter the field, when a shrill holloa gets them a view, and away they race, Pillager and the fox at length rolling over together down the slope of the adjoining pasture. Firebrand, Absolute, and General, complete the worry; and in an instant the rest of the pack are rumblety, tumblety, head-over-heels, with the fox in the middle!

Mr. Jessop jumping off his horse is presently in the midst of them, and stooping and extricating the fox from their fangs, holds up as fine an old dog one as ever was seen. Then the frantic pack jump and bay at our master, Victory, with a surprising spring, seizing the fox by the brush, and hanging on despite Mr. Jessop's efforts to disengage him. Horneyman, who is close at hand, gives his horse to a hind, and dashing up on foot, clears a ring round his master, who dropping the fox on the green sward, Victory lets go his hold, and slinks away to his companions around. Then, after a brief inspection and guess at the fox's age, out comes the old buck-handled knife, with which Horneyman performs the last obsequies of the chase, whipping off his fine head, which he lays on the ground, and handing the brush and pads as he kneels to our master.

The mutilated remains Horneyman then holds up on high, when the wrath of the pack being excited by the hoops and holloas of the horsemen, the carcase is thrown in mid air, and descending is caught by a myriad of mouths.

Worry, worry, worry, rush, crush, growl, snarl, scramble, is then the order of the day.

"Keep away your horses!" then cries Mr. Jessop, fearing for his hounds, when Resolute and Dexterous giving a unanimous pull, the carcase rolls down hill, and the danger is over.

"Now, where are the youngsters?" exclaims Mr. Jessop, advancing with his whip under his arm, and the proud trophies in his hand—"Where's Lob?" cries he, looking about for the rider of the skew-bald.

"Here!" cries the Jug, who has now got his little party marshalled around him.

"Well, now Lob, here's the brush for you, my fine lad," says Mr. Jessop, advancing towards him; "but stop," added he, "we must blood you first." So saying, Mr. Jessop made Lob a very fine moustache and imperial with the blood of the fox.

"Now then," said he, fastening the brush into Lob's bridle, "you tell your Mamma that you rode like a man." Then advancing to little Honeybrook, he smeared his face too, and giving him a pad, says he may tell his Mamma the same; after which Mr. Jovey Jessop handed the rest of the pads to his Jug to distribute as he chose.

The hounds meanwhile having finished their wrangling repast, and the whip fastened the fox's head into the couples, people begin to look at their watches, those who have had enough enquiring their ways home, others asking Mr. Jessop what he will draw next. Chippendale Woods being the never-failing resort, the word is given for them, which causes a still further dispersion of the field, one man dropping off at one lane end, another at another, till the Jug, our hero, and our master are the only red coats that remain. The deep-holding rides—enough to pull a horse's legs off—are too good a chance for Mr. Boyston to lose for taming Billy Rough'un, otherwise he would have preferred drawing Mr. Walker's or Mr. Eglantine's on his way home for a luncheon. As it is he lays the foundation for a future visit by sending his compliments, and desiring the boys to tell their Mammas that he will look in upon them the first time he is passing. He then, consigning them to the servants, takes a good holding grip of Billy Rough'un, as much as to say, now that we are clear of all care, I'll see whether you or I shall be master. And what with a slack rein, and an occasional touch of the spur, at the end of twenty minutes after they found, he certainly was a very different Billy Rough'un to what he was during the first run, and the Jug had the satisfaction of bringing him home very tame. He then added 120*l.* to his price, 140*l.* being what he considered him worth to any one who could ride him. And not being disposed to keep more horses than he wanted, he rocked himself asleep at night thinking whom he would suit.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

MR. ARCHEY ELLENGER'S DINNER.

Our hero, Mr. Bunting, did not prosecute the chase in Chippendale Woods. True, he went there, but it was only for the purpose of slipping away without the disagreeable leave-taking that we all dislike so. Greetings are pleasant, but adieus are melancholy. So when Mr. Jovey Jessop began yoicking and cheering his hounds on the high side of the extensive wood, Mr. Bunting struck up the middle ride, and, by aid of certain land-marks he had previously established, succeeded in finding his way into the Rookery lane, from whence he presently diverged upon the Buckworth and Badger field road. He then, by dint of copious inquiries and sundry deviations that he would have avoided if piloted by the Jug, came upon the more familiar landscape surrounding Appleton Hall. The house gained, he surrendered his horse, and committed himself to the care of the St. Leger pill-box on his return to Lord Cornwallis. The day was Saturday, and he was engaged to dine with Mr. Archey Ellenger on the following one.

Sunday was a *dies non* at Appleton Hall, both in the eating, drinking, and dressing way. There were neither sea-side coats nor tweeds, nor deer-stalker hats, nor turbans with tassels, nor any of the complications of modern ingenuity to be seen; but, on the contrary, very sedate Sunday clothes of the plain orthodox order. The Jug always inaugurated a pair of clean nankins, in which, regardless of the weather, with a large Boyston Park prayer-book, wrapped up in a red cotton kerchief, he stumped perseveringly to church, accompanied by Mr. Jessop, and such of the servants as liked his leading. The clergyman dined at the Hall, and there was a sermon for the establishment and neighbourhood in the evening. So Mr. Jessop commenced the week well, and prospered in the course of it, as he deserved to do. But we must follow our friend Mr. Bunting to his uncomfortable quarters at Burton St. Leger.

"Oh, I shall not dine at home to-day," exclaimed our hero to Mrs. Muldoon, as she appeared after breakfast at the door of his sitting-room to know what he would like to have for dinner, just as if he could have anything he called for. "I shall not dine at home to-day," repeated he, wishing to get rid of her, for he had stuck fast in the middle of a sonnet to Miss Rosa's ringlets, which he now thought he could hit off if she would go away.

"Oh, indeed," replied Mrs. Muldoon, looking somewhat disconcerted, adding, "I'd got a goose, thinking you might like a little change."

"Had you," replied Mr. Bunting, "had you; well, it will do for another day—it will do for another day;" adding, "I'm going to dine with Mr. Archey Ellenger to-day."

"Indeed!" mused Mrs. Muldoon, who, having now mastered the whole Privett Grove mystery, thought he might be going there.

"I shall want a conveyance of some sort!" exclaimed our friend, as she was about to withdraw; "I shall want a conveyance of some sort—I s'pose I can have the thing I had yesterday?"

"Well, sir, I dare say you can," replied Mrs. Muldoon, who had a convenient arrangement with the owner. "I'll send along and see." She then withdrew, and desired sore-eyed Sam to slip up and see if they could have Dr. Catcheyside's carriage, which, as usual, was much at Mrs. Muldoon's service.

Our hero, however, being still unable to extricate the muse, after a series of stumbles and blunders, at length shut up his desk, deciding that ringlets did not become Rosa, and presently obeyed the summons of the bells to church. In the afternoon he took a stroll about the place, met pretty Rebecca Mary dressed like a duchess, and sore-eyed Sam in all the glaring impotence of satin. There is nothing like a sloven for getting up smart on a Sunday. Mr. Bunting then had a look at his good-for-nothing horses, and wondered what he should do with them at the end. And, having exhausted the resources of the place, as the shades of evening drew on, he retired to his room, where Rebecca Mary, having put off her fine beaded bonnet and laid aside her parasol, was deranging her hoops by making up the white-ash burning fire.

Just as our friend was thinking of retiring to his bed-room to put on a dress-coat and vest and a pair of japanned Wellington boots with red morocco legs, the roll of a carriage was heard driving rapidly up to the inn door, which Mr. Bunting would have thought was coming for him, had not a voice immediately been heard exclaiming, "Is Mr. Bunting gone? Is Mr. Bunting gone?"

"No, sir," replied sore-eyed Sam, who had been attracted to the archway by the sound of the wheels; "but I expect Dr. Catcheyside's carriage coming for him every minute."

"Oh, that's all right!" exclaimed the voice, cheerfully, "that's all right!" adding, "then stand by my horse while I slip up stairs;" so saying, the speaker alighted and proceeded to grope his way towards an eight-in-the-pound mould-candle flickering in a glass cracked lantern placed against the wall at the bottom of the stairs.

"Vot name shall I enounce?" asked Monsieur Bonville of the stranger, Monsieur, too, having been attracted to the stairs by the sound of the wheels.

"Mr. Ellenger—Mr. Archibald Ellenger," replied the arriver, making the most of his name.

"Ellenger, Ellenger, why that's the man I'm going to dine with," muttered Mr. Bunting, as the familiar sound came up the little staircase leading to his room.

Mr. Ellenger then ran a dead heat with his name. "Ah, my dear fellow!" exclaimed he, tripping gaily into the apartment, seizing Mr. Bunting's right hand with both his, and pressing it fervently. "Ah, my dear fellow! I'm so glad I've got in time to stop you—I'm so glad I've got in time to stop you; I've had a desperate misfortune at home—I've had a desperate misfortune at home. My cook's got so scandalously drunk that she is utterly incompetent—put the cod-fish on to the spit, and wanted to boil the goose with lobster sauce!"

"What fun!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, not sorry to be off the engagement.

"Fun to her, but death to us," rejoined Mr. Ellenger, releasing Mr. Bunting's hand. "I'd got the nicest little dinner and the nicest little party that ever were arranged; and then the cruel catamaran goes and spoils all by her confounded intemperance."

"Well, better luck next time," replied Mr. Bunting, soothingly; "better luck next time."

"Ah, that's very kind of you," rejoined Mr. Ellenger, again seizing Mr. Bunting's hand and pressing it warmly; "that's very kind of you, but I assure you I feel the disappointment exceedingly."

"Misfortunes will happen in the best regulated families—misfortunes will happen in the best regulated families," rejoined Mr. Bunting.

"So they will," said Mr. Ellenger, "so they will; and we must just make the best of it," adding adroitly, "there's nothing like a lady for keeping matters right. I wouldn't have cared so much if it had been any day but Sunday," observed Mr. Ellenger; "only when a man loses his Sunday dinner, he has no place to fall back upon."

"Oh, yes, I have," rejoined our hero, "I've a goose in the house."

"Goose in the house! have you," exclaimed Mr. Ellenger, brightening up; "goose in the house! well, that's a good hearing."

"At least, there was," observed Mr. Bunting, "and I've not smelt its disappearance. A goose, you know, leaves a strong scent."

"So it does," said Mr. Ellenger, "so it does; and by the way I'll tell you what," continued he, as if a bright thought had just struck him, "I'll tell you what, I'll just go down stairs and see if it is in existence still, and tell them to put it down, and I will dine with you, and you shall dine with me some other day."

"Do," replied Mr. Bunting, rather chagrined at the proposal.

"Dine as soon as it is ready, I suppose?" asked Mr. Ellenger.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Bunting, "I shall be ready when it is."

"That's a bargain!" exclaimed our brisk old friend, wheeling about

and leaving the room. He then proceeded down stairs, making straight for the street, where sore-eyed Sam stood in charge of the horse. "Sam," said he, "put up that horse; give him two feeds of corn and hay, and have him ready to put to about nine o'clock; but don't put him to till I tell you."

"Yes, sir," replied Sam, surprised at the magnificence of the order; for Archey was generally a pail of water, and "I'll remember you next time," man.

The horse thus disposed of, Mr. Ellenger next made for the bar, to see what he could do for himself. "Ah, Matty!" exclaimed he, going gaily into the little room just as he had done to Mr. Bunting; "ah, Matty! how goes it," advancing up to the sot as he sat with his glass and his pipe by the fire.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Muldoon, not recognising Archey in his dark non-hunting dress.

"Who is it?" repeated Archey, "why, *me* to be sure. Mr. Ellenger!"

"Ellenger—Ellenger," growled Muldoon, knocking the ashes out of his pipe on the floor. "Ellenger—Ellenger," repeated he, looking intently at his own toes for an idea, "why, you owe me three and ninepence," said he, blinking intently at Archey.

"No, I don't," replied Mr. Ellenger.

"Yes, you do," asserted Matty, confidently.

"How do you make it out?" demanded Mr. Ellenger.

"Make it out," replied Matty, "make it out—the missis makes it out; but I know you do."

"Hut, fiddle man; you're drunk man," replied Mr. Ellenger, turning carelessly away.

"Drunk!" retorted Matty, "drunk! there's not a soberer respectabler man in Her Majesty's domin—minions than (hiccup) I. What do you (hiccup) mean by saying I'm (hiccup)?" demanded he, blinking and shaking his head angrily at our fox-hunter.

"What's the matter, now?" asked fat Mrs. Muldoon, bustling in with her keys.

"Oh, nothing," replied Archey; "nothing, only your good man's made a mistake. Tell me," continued he, drawing Mrs. Muldoon aside, "what can Mr. Bunting and I have for dinner?"

"Mr. Bunting is going to dine out," observed Mrs. Muldoon.

"No, he was going to dine with me," replied Mr. Ellenger, "but I have had a misfortune in my kitchen—cook taken ill—and so I am going to take a little dinner with him here instead."

"Oh, indeed," replied Mrs. Muldoon, thinking matters over. "Well, sir, what would you like to have?"

"What have you got?" asked Archey, taking a short cut to the point; adding, "not mutton-chops, beef-steaks—beef-steaks, mutton-chops, mind."

"Well, there's a goose," said Mrs. Muldoon, complacently.

"Goose! is there?" exclaimed Archey, adding, "well, that will do. No fish, I suppose?"

"Fish," said Mrs. Muldoon, "fish; yes, there are some haddocks."

"Capital!" rejoined Archey; "a couple of haddocks—or say three—egg sauce, you know; and now about sweets—what have you got in the way of sweets?"

"What would you like?" asked Mrs. Muldoon, in the usual provoking style of inn answers.

"Oh, like! I should like an *omelette au confiture*, or some little delicacy of that sort; but what I am likely to get is the thing."

"Well, sir, would you like a damson tart, or an apple pudding?"

"Damson tart, apple pudding?" replied Archey; "well, apple pudding's very good with goose. Yes, we'll have an apple pudding. And now about wine—what wine have you?"

"We have all sorts of wine," replied Mrs. Muldoon; "port, sherry, Madeira, cowslip, tent, grape, and elder."

"Bother your grape and elder!" retorted Archey; "have you any champagne?"

"Well, yes, we just have one bottle," replied Mrs. Muldoon; "one bottle that we kept for old Lord Lushborough, who used to sleep here on his way up and down."

"Lord Lushborough! Lord Lushborough's been dead these twenty years!" exclaimed Archey.

"Well, not so long as that," rejoined Mrs. Muldoon; "it was shortly after the opening of the railway, which ruined our calling, and we have never been asked for a bottle since."

"Ah, well, it will be good for nothing; but, however, you may send it up, and if it's drinkable we'll drink it, if not you'll get it back." So saying, and after urging Mrs. Muldoon to activity, Mr. Ellenger retired, followed by a heavy growl from Matty about the three and ninepence he owed him. Having reported to Mr. Bunting what he had done, Mr. Ellenger then excused himself for half an hour while he went to visit his good friend Mr. Buckwheat, and see if he could arrange a billet with him for some future occasion. The half-hour was somehow protracted into an hour; and when Archey came blundering down the street in the dark, the smell of the goose would have arrested his progress even if the economical candle had not been flickering an equivocal light in the archway. Mr. Ellenger stopped like a pointer crossing a scent, and, turning short in, regaled his olfactory nerves with the smell as he proceeded leisurely up stairs to Mr. Bunting's apartment. Here he found our friend making another attempt at the impracticable sonnet, which he whipped away with his rhyming dictionary into his desk. Mr. Ellenger then hung up his hat and proceeded to make himself at home. He was so sorry about the cook—nasty drunken creature—but he would give her up in the morning.

However, things might have been worse if they could not have got any dinner; and while they were discussing the matter, the increased clatter of plates below was followed by the bump of a tray against the turn of the staircase, and Bonville presently appeared with the fish. The haddocks were good, the goose was good, and though the champagne was dead and ropy, the sherry was passable, and so was the port. Mr. Ellenger did ample justice to all. The leathery cheese being at length removed, the cloth drawn, and some red hard-featured apples and lemon-coloured oranges placed on the table, Monsieur Bonville having arranged the composites, presently withdrew, shutting our friends up for a confab.

Mr. Ellenger was one of those accommodating gentlemen who will tell people anything they see they want told. Of course he knew all about our friend and Miss Rosa, and after a cursory glance at some of the other beauties—the Springfields, the Beauchamps, the Bedfords—he turned the conversation upon her. Like Mrs. Tom Trattles, he knew, or professed to know, everything—how much there was in the funds, how much in railways, how much in canal shares. Altogether he made out a very encouraging report. He only hoped Miss Rosa would marry some producible person, and not that young cub of a banker. Archey did not like "sivin and four," who had hitherto successfully resisted all attempts on his larder. He had never been able to get even as much as a water-biscuit out of him.

To Mr. Bunting's inquiry if he really thought there was anything between Miss Rosa and young Goldspink, Mr. Ellenger replied, with a shrug of his shoulders, that he really couldn't say, he only knew he was frequently there; and when a young man went to a house where there was a young lady, of course there was always the usual inference. And Mr. Bunting, not wishing to appear too inquisitive, did not press the inquiry, but, tapping the now nearly-emptied port-wine decanter with his dessert-knife, asked Mr. Ellenger if he would take a little more of that, or try what the claret was like? but Mr. Ellenger, having a stout British stomach, little addicted to vinegar, declared for the port; whereupon another bottle, or as much of a bottle as the decanter would hold, was produced, the greater part of which Mr. Ellenger succeeded in placing under his waistcoat. And the moon having at length risen, and Mr. Ellenger having had tea, coffee, and *chasse*, presently ordered his vehicle; and after an affectionate leave-taking, and making Mr. Bunting promise faithfully to dine with him "some day," he tucked himself carefully in, and, telling sore-eyed Sam he had no silver, went lilting and tilting away back to Kids Hill, extremely well pleased with the result of his *ruse*. The cook was no more drunk than we are.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

THE TENDER PROP REPEATED.

Though the new bonnet was a sore subject with Mrs. Goldspink, it was rather a useful one for Miss Rosa. It made Mrs. Goldspink knag and talk against Mrs. McDermott and her daughter, and as a natural consequence, made our friend Jasper more keen and determined about the young lady. And as Mr. Bunting was equally ardent there was presently very brisk competition, and much ringing at the Privett Grove door bell. Our friend, the Jug, too dropped in occasionally on his own account; so that altogether there was a very considerable amount of billing and cooing going on at the Grove. This being the fanning up time, people talked very amiably and complacently of the Jug and his property—such an old family—such a nice place; and said he had been quite the saving of Mr. Jessop, who but for his good and virtuous guidance would soon have degenerated into a regular sot. Then as to Admiration Jack and Jasper, the ladies (for it is they alone who dabble in these matters) declared that either was excellent, whichever in fact seemed to be the favourite; so that all seemed to be unanimous, so far as the tongues were concerned. If, however, Mamma and Miss Rosa could have over-heard the mirth and ejaculations that burst forth as their dear friends got away from the house, they would not have had much opinion of their sincerity—little flirt—old fool—drunken creature, alluding to Boyston,—pity him—pity her—pity them, and so on.

Our friend Mr. Bunting, as we said before, had had much experience in courtship, and though he had undoubtedly been kept in abeyance a good while, yet he was not altogether unwilling to procrastinate the suit, so long as he felt certain of winning at last. Despite Mr. Archey Ellenger's information, and also despite meeting our friend Jasper at the Grove, occasionally, he had no doubt whatever that he himself was to be the happy man, and so treated Jasper with a proper mixture of pity and condescension. The advent of the Jug now, however, rather altered matters, and Mamma thinking Rosa might do well to suit herself with one or other of the gentlemen, gave her the usual opportunities, losing her keys, forgetting her kerchief, or being called away to see new servants, and so on.

Some ladies pretend to get offers without expecting them, and practise all sorts of elegant little airs and graces on the occasion, start and

stare as if wholly unable to comprehend what the gentleman means, or declare that they are really so taken by surprise that they must be allowed a little time for reflection—that they have a high opinion of Captain Trophy, Mr. Green, or whoever the suitor may be, but that he had never crossed the fair one's mind in any other light than that of an agreeable companion, thus paying an indirect compliment to their own looks at the expense of their veracity. A man must be very simple who believes such a story.

Though Miss Rosa had not had much experience in the offering way, and that only with our hero, yet her womanly instinct told her to a minute when it was coming, and after flashing a glance at her ques-

tioner, she turned aside as if unable to speak her emotion. Mr. Bunting, who had had this style of answer before, and knew how to deal with it, then seized her in his arms, and impressed such a volley of kisses

on her coral lips and fair cheeks, as enabled him to present her to Mamma on her return as his own accepted bride. And Mamma equally astonished, was delighted to hear the good news, and after saying all sorts of handsome things on behalf of her daughter, concluded by declaring that she was sure Mr. Bunting would make Rosa an excellent husband, and she wished them all possible joy and prosperity, whereupon she too kissed her daughter extravagantly. All this unwonted energy and exercise naturally drew forth the tears and the kerchief, and John Thomas happening to come in with the coals in the midst of the sunshiny shower, reported to Miss Perker, the maid, what he had seen; whereupon Perker immediately jumped to the conclusion that the hero of the Roseberry Rocks sash, was to be her future master. And in less than five minutes, the news was all over the house, and conveyed to Crop and the groom gardener in the stable. And a great commotion was the consequence—great speculation as to when they would be married, where they would live, what Jasper would say, and whether "Missis" herself was going to change her condition—they thought it looked very like it—but they would soon see.

Save for the triumph and perhaps the sake of appearances among friends, there is very little use in announcing a match—people all know it so well long beforehand. Ladies, however, have always great pleasure in proclaiming them, and Mr. Bunting's offer was speedily trumpeted throughout the county. The news was variously received by the young and the old. The young were always sure that Mr. Bunting would be the man, while the old shook their heads, and said, they'd believe it when they saw it. It wasn't likely a worldly-minded woman, like Mrs. McDermott, was going to let such an undoubted prize as young Goldspink slip through her fingers.—Who was Mr. Bunting?

Mrs. McDermott was now rather puzzled how to act with regard to her dear friend Mr. Goldspink, whether to let him hear of the engagement from some one else, or to call and inform the banker's lady herself. On thinking it over, she saw no reason why she should not call herself. There had never anything really serious passed between the Mammas, save a mutual confidence and readiness to leave the young people together. If Jasper did not choose to be on the alert, Rosa was not to miss a chance by waiting for him. Certainly not. He might never have come forward. Dared say Mrs. Goldspink thought they would consider Jasper a catch, but this offer would show that they were not dependent upon him.

So she determined to go herself; and the brougham, and the invidious bonnet were speedily back at sivin-and-four's door. Mrs. McDermott arrived at a critical time, for Jasper had just heard of Miss Rosa's engagement from his turf friend, Mr. Tailings, and had been upbraiding his mother most roundly for the part she had taken in the matter, declaring he would throw himself off the church steeple, or

go to Van Diemen's Land forthwith, if he didn't get Rosa. Mrs. Goldspink was frightened, for Jasper was accustomed to have his own way, and could ill put up with any opposition. Instead therefore of following Jasper's furious example, she tried the soothing system, commencing of course by kissing Mrs. McDermott, and then after a sort of half-congratulation proceeded in a round-about way to insinuate (simper) that there was a (cough) time when she might have (hem) hoped to have had the (sneeze) pleasure of calling dear Rosa her (cough) daughter; but—and then she paused, apparently taken up with something that had got entwined in the silk fringe of her cloak. Mrs. McDermott bobbed and simpered too; she was sure she had always felt and expressed the greatest regard for dear Jasper as well on account of his own intrinsic worth, as on that of his excellent parents; and nothing would have given her greater (hem) pleasure than cementing their long (cough) intimacy with a match, but—and here too she was brought up short, and began feeling for her kerchief. Each then sat sighing for a while, until perhaps emboldened by the success of her approaches, and thinking of Jasper's proposed descent from the steeple, Mrs. Goldspink proceeded to make more inquiries, asked all about Mr. Bunting and his means, whether his Papa was alive, if he had a place of his own, where it was, and finding that there was a good deal yet to ascertain, she said that of course Mrs. McDermott would see that Rosa was properly secured, and she then began to talk of her husband's old sivin-and-four's great wealth, Jasper's fine expectations, and the beautiful villa they were building, of which she produced the plans, showing the kitchens, cellars, and shoe house, larder, dairy, and everything. Then, after a prolonged sit, dear Mrs. McDermott returned dear Mrs. Goldspink's kiss, and saw her to her carriage, feeling considerably relieved by the result of her visit. And Mrs. Goldspink made such a representation to her son as induced him to postpone as well his aerial flight, as his journey to Van Diemen's Land.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

MAMMA INSTEAD OF MISS.

The same want that we named before—that of some instrument or invention whereby people may be enabled to ascertain the hidden thoughts and feelings of others, again beset our friend Mr. Bunting in his pursuit of the fair and beautiful Miss Rosa. "Dear Mamma," as he had now begun to call Mrs. McDermott, who had thereto been all smiles and confidence, suddenly changed, and became so pressingly urgent to know all about him and his affairs, that he could not imagine what had happened. The morning after her visit to Mrs. Goldspink, at Mayfield, instead of descending as he expected upon Miss Rosa alone in the drawing-room, he was shown up a step into the parlour, where sat Mamma, hemming a stout Baden Baden towel, who at once two-fingered him into a very uneasy high-backed low chair, saying with a keen eye and a somewhat compressed mouth, that she wished to have a few minutes' conversation with him before he saw Miss Rosa; laying a slight emphasis on the word Miss.

Mr. Bunting of course knew what was coming, and demeaned himself accordingly, taking his seat with the air of a man entering a dentist's throne. Mrs. McDermott did not begin as some of his lady confessors had done, by asking about his religious principles, his political opinions, or speaking on any extraneous subject, but after a dry prefatory *hem*, she glanced at the compliment he had paid to her daughter, and the high opinion they both entertained of him, and then proceeded to say that she was sure Mr. Bunting would agree with her, that it was desirable to come to a distinct understanding as soon as possible, for that long engagements were always to be deprecated, and people did talk so that it made her quite nervous and uncomfortable, and in short she should like exceedingly to have the thing settled forthwith. And after a few repetitions she began to pinch the Baden Baden towel severely, as if in search of fresh ideas.

Mr. Bunting, who during this exordium had been twirling his turban hat, then dropped it on the floor, and clasping his hands, with upturned eyes, proceeded to indulge in the most high-flown panegyrics on the beauty of her daughter, the sweetness of her smile, the perfection of her figure, the elegance of her walk; declaring that her electric eyes had quite penetrated his heart the first moment he had seen her. To all which compliments Mrs. McDermott kept smirking

and smiling and pinching the Baden towel, considering how she should get him worked round into the right tack.

"Well, I'm sure Rosa has cause to be proud of your good opinion," at length interposed she; "but courtship and matrimony, you know, are proverbially different, and it won't do to marry smiles and dimples and pretty figures alone; there must be prudence and consideration for the future, and now, you know, is the proper time for making all necessary arrangements."

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Bunting, "undoubtedly; though with the girl of one's heart these matters are of very minor importance." And before Mrs. McDermott could interpose her opinion to the contrary, our poetical friend had broken right away with his favourite quotation:

> "With her conversing I forget all time,
> All seasons and their change," &c.

going right through to the end of it.

Mrs. McDermott, however, kept the point steadily in her mind, and when he had concluded she looked up from her towel, and drily observed that love in a cottage was very well in theory, but it did not do in practice—that all ladies liked large houses, and concluded by asking him point blank if he hadn't a castle in Scotland.

"Well—ye-as," drawled Mr. Bunting, looking at the tip of his Balmoral boot.

"Rosa would like a castle," observed Mrs. Mc Dermott, drily. "What was it called?"

"Buntingbury Castle," replied our hero.

"Buntingbury Castle, indeed—called after himself?"

"After my grandfather, Admiral Bunting," replied our friend.

"Oh, indeed! a family place, is it?" observed Mrs. McDermott, perking up—Goldspink and Garlandale rather going down.

"Was it large?" asked she.

"Well, no—not large—usual size of a castle, I suppose," replied our hero; (just as if there was ever a usual size for a castle—Little Belvoir, and real Belvoir, for instance).

Mrs. McDermott then applied herself assiduously to her Baden Baden towel, taking some rapid stitches, and an equally rapid retrospect of the Roseberry Rocks anonymous letter. The writer, if she recollected right, couldn't say that Mr. Bunting hadn't a castle—only told her to question him about his castle. Well, she had questioned him about his castle, and he said he had one. What more could she do? She really thought the writer had just wanted to spoil Rosa's chance. And Goldspink and Garlandale sunk still lower in her estimation. Buntingbury Castle on the top of a letter would sound far finer than Garlandale, Garlandale Lodge, or Garlandale Villa, or whatever they decided to call it.

"Well," said Mrs. McDermott, looking up from her work with a smile, "I suppose it will be all right."

"I suppose so," replied Mr. Bunting, who had rather his misgivings about the castle. He could have wished that "dear mamma" had led off with some exposition of what she herself would do than thus throw the onus of the whole arrangement upon him. If she married the Jug, who was evidently after her, there would be very small chance of getting her to give up any part of her life interest in what there was to dear Rosa. Altogether Mr. Bunting was as depressed as Mrs. McDermott was elated. He was tired of the returns made to the castle inquiries, and would gladly have left that property out of the reckoning, or only brought it in incidentally.

Now, if the before-mentioned much-wanted invention or instrument were in existence and use, our hero would have seen his way clearly through his dilemma—would have said at once when John Thomas ushered him up stairs instead of down, "Ah, my dear Mrs. McDermott, I know how it is—I know how it is—Mrs. Goldspink and you have had an imparlance, and as I can't compete in the cash way, I must withdraw." For want of that knowledge, as we shall now show, he was led on to the lawyers.

"I have no doubt it will be all right," again observed Mrs. McDermott, who having considered the matter further over remembered what Mrs. Trattles had said about the property. "I have no doubt it will be all right," repeated she, thinking Mr. Bunting was modest and did not wish to magnify his means.

Our friend inwardly wished that it might be all right.

"Well, then," resumed Mrs. McDermott, measuring the towel off with her forefinger, "as ladies are not great hands at business, and I really know nothing about it (here she did herself injustice, for she was a dab hand at it, and always thought herself cheated, whatever she got)—as ladies are not great hands at business, and I really know nothing whatever about it, perhaps the best thing will be to leave the further arrangements to our respective lawyers."

"Perhaps it will," assented Mr. Bunting, who had a very wholesome dread of their perplexing interference. How many promising matches he had known them nip in the bud! In fact no man should say he is going to be married until he gets their assent. There are far more fires stamped out than fanned up.

"Mr. Ballivant—Mr. George Ballivant, of Hassenden, is my solicitor," observed Mrs. McDermott. "There are two Ballivants, George and John—but I don't like John, he let a party rather get the advantage of me in the matter of a cow. George is my man, and I'll send for him to come over, say to-morrow—the sooner these matters are settled the better, and then we shall have nothing but pleasurable arrangements to occupy us."

"So be it," said Mr. Bunting, with a bow, and certain inward qualms as to the result.

"Well, then, shall we go and see Rosa?" asked Mamma, rising and folding her Baden Baden towel as she spoke.

"If you please," said Mr. Bunting, getting up from the stool of repentance and proceeding to open the door.

Mamma then led the way down the step, and along the little passage to where a yellow ochre sheep-skin denoted the descent to the drawing-room. The door opened, when lo! who should appear but our fat friend Jasper; Jasper in the full swing of Miss Rosa's work-box, just as if it were his own—Miss too smiling through her Ringlets at something he was saying.

"Holloa, old boy! how are you?" said Mr. Bunting haughtily, after squeezing Rosa's soft hand with a gloveless embrace. He had come in with the full expectation of saluting her more enthusiastically, and was much disappointed at the result.

"Holloa, old boy, how are you?" was the familiar inquiry he now made of the destroyer of all his expected bliss.

"Tol-lol," replied Jasper, now carelessly rolling a pink and a green silk winder backwards and forwards on the table in a race.

Mr. Bunting then took a seat on the other side of the charmer, who was busy pricking her fingers pretending to work, though in reality much perplexed at this unlucky meeting of her suitors. She well knew what Mamma had been doing, and now judged from her face that things had gone right, and that she ought not to have been in Ringlets. But Rosa maintained an equitable equilibrium between the two gentlemen notwithstanding, giving as much of her attention to one as the other. And each ultimately left with a comfortable anticipation of the future. Jasper, who dined earliest, having to go first, Mamma was enabled to inform Mr. Bunting at parting that she had written to Mr. Ballivant to be at Privett Grove at twelve on the morrow, when she hoped Mr. Bunting would be able to come. And Mr. Bunting promised that he would; and being called away with her keys, our hero drew for the bliss and interest that he had been obliged to leave in Cupid's treasury before.

The house being then quiet, Mamma and Miss had an anxious confab, in which each told the other what their respective guests had said and done—Jasper having in fact been, as Miss Rosa expressed it, quite "as rude to her as Mr. Bunting." Mamma said well, that there would soon be an end of that work, inasmuch as she had written to Mr. Ballivant to come in the morning, and put things upon a proper footing, for she was getting tired of procrastination; and moreover she thought (though this she kept to herself), that these wild youths might be the means of keeping the steady old Jug away from the house. So she determined to close the accounts one way or other.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

THE GRAND INQUISITION.

Next day at eleven o'clock, for Mamma had made the appointment an hour earlier than she told Mr. Bunting to come, in order that she might, what she called, "insense Mr. Ballivant into the case," a Hassenden fly drove up to the door, from which emerged a stout, elderly gentleman, in a shiny black coat and vest, a puddingy white cravat with flowing ends, and drab shorts and continuations, who, despite John Thomas's caution, presently came head foremost into the drawing-room. After a series of stumbles, which looked very like bringing him on his knees altogether, he at length recovered his legs, and began with the bow that he intended for entering, Mrs. McDermott having apologised as usual for the step, then backed him into a well-cushioned chair, and drawing her own straight-backed one close up to him, proceeded in a voluble manner to explain all how and about the cause of her wanting him.

Mr. Ballivant was well through the morning of life, and, moreover, had had three wives, with a numerous family by each, though never a penny with any, so that he was quite past all the romance and sentiment of the thing, and looked upon matrimony in a conveyancing point of view. A beautiful young lady about to be transferred to a well-looking gentleman, provided said gentleman satisfied the expectations of Mamma.

"Query—what are the expectations?" As much as she can get of course, replied Mr. Ballivant, answering his own question; and he thought he saw his way to what was wanted.

Mr. Ballivant was rather a good hand at this sort of work, and had tied some couples up so tightly that they were almost starved themselves in order that their descendants might live. Moreover he knew there was competition in this case, and though he did not like Sivin-and-Four, he had no objection to his paper. So he thought what with one or other of the gentlemen, he would have a very good job, and doubtless get a large slice of sugary almondy bride-cake, of which he was particularly fond—as indeed we all are, only somehow we seldom get any now—cards are a very poor substitute for cake. Punctual to his appointment, scarcely had the drawing-room clock ceased striking eleven, for it was always an hour in arrear, when Mr. Bunting (who had come unattended, and put up puffing Billy, as sore-eyed Sam

called the gray, himself) was seen wending his way past the window, making for the front door. A gentle tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, of the bell, was quickly followed by the tramp of John Thomas's feet to open the door.

"He will show him into the parlour," observed Mrs. McDermott as Mr. Ballivant began fidgetting and getting himself ready to rise for a presentation—"he will show him into the parlour, and now before we go," continued she, gathering herself up, and growing urgent as she spoke, "Don't forget to ask him about his castle, whether it has turrets and towers and everything becoming," adding, "Rosa would like a nice place—now mind the step," continued she, leading the way to the door, and pointing to the unfortunate impediment, which being cleared, she continued her course along the passage, giving Mr. Ballivant a similar caution as to the ascending step at the parlour door. That being opened, Mr. Bunting was discovered warming his hands before a spluttering fire, after a rather chilly ride, rendered more irksome by the unfortunate infirmity of his horse, who, indeed, seemed to get worse in his wind instead of better.

Mrs. McDermott advanced and received him most cordially, apologising for the badness of the fire, fearing he was cold, and then introducing Mr. Ballivant to warm him, after a few common-places about the weather, she said she would retire, as she really knew nothing about business, and they would do much better without her. So saying, she gave her crinoline a twirl, observing as she sailed away, that they would find her in the drawing-room when they were done. And in another second our hero found himself alone with his father confessor, pic-nics, polkas, sonnets, regattas, witchery of all sorts, coming at last to the dull shrine of Plutus. Half an hour would settle the hopes and aspirations of half a-year.

Mr. Ballivant was a rough man but an honest one, and treated every thing in a cool business-like way.

"Well, now," said he, scrutinising our dandified friend attentively as the rustle of the departing petticoats subsided, "I 'spose you know what I've come for. I've nothing to do with your looks, or your manners, or your figure, or nothing of that sort—those the ladies will please themselves about—but just to inquire into your circumstances, what you have got, and what you will do, in short."

"Just so," replied Mr. Bunting, who knew the point quite as well as Mr. Ballivant did.

"Miss McDermott will have a purty fortune," observed Mr. Ballivant, beginning by enhancing his offering, "and for looks, I think, I may say she is unsurpassed."

"She 's beautiful!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting enthusiastically, "and as good as she 's beautiful;" "in fact," added he, "hers is

'Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.'"

"Well, then, we'll not go into that point either," interrupted Mr. Ballivant, "but just dot down what you think we should do." So

saying, he placed a couple of chairs side by side at the table, and diving into his outside coat pocket, drew forth a sheet of note paper, and a little brown Russia leather inkstand.

"Always travel with my own implements," observed he, unscrewing the top of the inkstand, and placing it before him; "ladies' pens never write, only scratch," continued he, taking one of his own out. He then put on a pair of formidable-looking tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles, through which, having glanced at the great broad nib of his pen, he smoothed out his paper, and after a good steady stare at our friend, as though he were about to take his portrait, said, "What shall we begin with, land or cash, £. *s. d.*?"

"Ah, Sir, I see it's the old Hudibrastic story,

> "For when upon their ungot heirs
> Th'entail themselves and all that's theirs,
> What blinder bargain e'er was driven
> Or wager laid at six or seven,
> To pass themselves away, and turn
> Their childrens' tenants ere they're born,"

exclaimed Mr. Bunting, "everything tied up now-a-days."

"Safe bind, safe find," replied Mr. Ballivant, nothing moved by Mr. Bunting's poetry; but moving his pen as if he wished to be writing.

Seeing there was no help for it, Mr. Bunting began with his money, rehearsing his oft-repeated lesson with the ease of a charity school-boy saying his catechism, so much in consols, so much in Indian debentures, so much in railway shares, &c., all of which Mr. Ballivant recorded in tremendous thick mile-stone-like letters as Mr. Bunting spoke.

When Mr. Ballivant invited him to his land, our hero went very delicately over that part of his story, observing that he did not exactly know how they could make it the subject of a settlement, inasmuch as it was forest which yielded an uncertain income—much or little—dependent of course upon the quantity of wood they cut; but Mr. Ballivant having duly consulted the nib of his pen, thought Mr. Coupler, the conveyancer, would make something of it, at all events he would record the name, age, and acreage of the wood. And our hero having supplied him with these particulars, and given him a good deal of visionary information into the bargain, referring him to "Daffun on Planting" in corroboration of what he said, tried to have his own innings by asking about the "purty fortune" which his interrogator had mentioned at starting.

Mr. Bunting had been to Doctors' Commons, and knew that Mamma had the property for life. This turn rather threw the man-of-law off his point, and put him upon the evasive tack.

"Yes, she would have a purty fortune—purty fortune for a lady at least," replied Mr. Ballivant, feeling that Mr. Boyston was going to pinch him in return.

"Well, but is it in possession?" asked our friend.

"Possession? yes, in possession—possession of her Mamma—Mrs. McDermott, at least."

"Ah, that's another matter," replied our hero. "It will be a long time before her Mamma is done with—at least I hope so."

Mr. Ballivant hoped so too.

"Well, but Mr. Bunting supposed her Mamma would make Miss Rosa an allowance?"

Mr. Ballivant really could not answer that question.

The two then sat mute for a while, Ballivant conning over the result of his inquiries as it appeared in his great thick penmanship; Bunting

considering whether he should ask Ballivant if, in the event of Mrs. McDermott marrying again, any part of the fortune went away from her. He had forgotten to look at that part of the will, the Jug not being then in the field. Thinking that might be too pointed a question, he essayed to put it sideways: "They talk of Madam marrying again," observed he, rubbing his hands with ill-counterfeited glee.

"Do they?" replied the man of law, raising his brows, as if he had never heard of it before.

"Most likely all talk," suggested Mr. Bunting.

"Most likely," assented Mr. Ballivant, casting back in his mind for something he felt he had forgot. He could not hit it off—he had milked his man clean as to his means, and could not think of any other topic. He was sure Mr. Bunting was desperately in love, and would do anything unreasonable in the way of a settlement, which is always a most desirable state of mind in which to have a young man. Ballivant then restored his little stumpy pen to its case, and after again conning his notes, arose and held them to the fire to dry the great cesspools of ink of which they were composed. Mr. Bunting, feeling like a man retiring from a witness-box, arose too, saying, "then I suppose that will be all you'll want with me?"

"I think so," replied Mr. Ballivant, tardily, "I think so; all at present at least—stay!—save the name of your solicitor;" which Mr. Bunting having given him, our hero then shook hands with his executioner, and gladly retired to his charmer. She was all smiles, radiance, and affability; and Mamma, under pretence of seeing about luncheon, presently hurried away to the scene of the inquisition. Mr. Ballivant was just unlimbering his great tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles and pocketing his implements of torture as she entered.

"Well, what have you made out?" exclaimed Mrs. McDermott, with bated breath hastening up to him.

"Well, mum, I think he'll do," replied Mr. Ballivant, slowly and sententiously, "I think he'll do."

"You do, do you!" exclaimed Mrs. McDermott.

"Yes, mum, I think he will—he has a purty fortune."

"How much?" asked she, coming at once to the point.

"Well, that I can't exactly say, mum, until I make further inquiries; but I should say he has a purty fortune—yes, a purty fortune. And Miss Rosa, I told him, would have a purty fortune too."

"Yes, when I'm done with it," rejoined Mrs. McDermott.

"Certainly," assented Mr. Ballivant, who suspected as much.

"It's not a case of necessity, you know," whispered Mrs. McDermott; "Rosa has another string to her bow, and a good one."

"Perhaps so, mum," assented Mr. Ballivant, "perhaps so, mum; but there's an old saying, you know, mum, about the two stools, that you'll perhaps remember, mum."

"There's no fear of that in this case," asserted Mamma.

"Well, as far as this gentleman is concerned I should say not," replied Mr. Ballivant.

"Nor the other either," rejoined Mrs. McDermott.

"Then Miss Rosa is well laid in, and no doubt something will come of it; meanwhile I will make some inquiries and report progress to you as quickly as I can." So saying, Mr. Ballivant made a sort of crab-like movement towards the door, in which he was checked by the following exclamation from Mamma:

"But how about the Castle, is there a keep and a dungeon, and everything proper?"

"Oh, the Castle!" exclaimed Mr. Ballivant, stamping as he recollected himself; "I knew there was something I'd forgotten. It *was* the Castle! How provoking! Had a flag-staff in my mind all the time, and somehow it got carried quite away to sea."

"Oh yes, there should be a flag-staff too! you know," replied Mamma, "else how would people know when they are at home?"

"Well then, mum, I really quite forgot all about it," said Mr. Ballivant, honestly. "I really forgot all about it, thinking of the more important points. Shall I make an excuse for seeing Mr. Bunting again?"

"I hardly know," mused Mrs. McDermott, "I hardly know. Perhaps we could manage an opportunity after luncheon."

"Luncheon I never take, mum, thank'ee," replied Mr. Ballivant, hauling up a great gold watch by its new blue ribbon from his fob. "I dine at three, and it will take me that time to get home; but I'll tell you what I can do, mum, I can make the inquiries by letter along with the others I have to institute."

"Well, that may do perhaps," observed Mrs. McDermott, "or Rosa might make them herself of Mr. Bunting."

"Certainly," assented Mr. Ballivant; "or we might both make them, and then we could see how the stories agreed."

"That would do," said Mrs. McDermott, apparently satisfied, and now leading the way to the door. "Rosa!" exclaimed she, as she got into the passage, "Rosa! Mr. Ballivant is going away, dear!" whereupon our fair heroine broke off her *tête-a-tête* with our friend, and came out of the drawing-room at once to greet and bid Mr. Ballivant good-bye.

Ballivant bowed low to our beauty, who graciously tendered him her hand, which encouraged the grand inquisitor to repeat the opinion to her he had previously expressed to Mamma, namely, that he thought Mr. Bunting would do; adding, that "he hoped he would make her a good husband, which he was sure she deserved to have;" and that being about as much gallantry as he could muster at the moment, he turned to Mamma, saying, "Still you know, mum, it is well to be prudent, and I would advise you to keep Miss back a little for the present." Whereupon Rosa, forgetting she had left the drawing-room door open,

replied gaily, "Oh, you needn't be afraid of me, Mr. Ballivant! You needn't be afraid of me, I'm not one of the sentimental sort," a hearing that was anything but agreeable to our hero, who thought himself quite irresistible.

The old cast-iron-like cab-horse, having waited at the door for his cargo, Mr. Ballivant was presently in the fetid vehicle, and the harsh steps being raised, the dirty driver whipped lazily away, quite unconscious of the sensation the appearance of his passenger was creating in the country. "What's up?" was the question at many a dinner and tea-table that day as Ballivant's vehicle was traced to Privett Grove. Was it the Jug? or was it Miss Rosa? or was it the young Banker? or who? They would like uncommonly to know. Meanwhile, Mr. Ballivant having driven away from the door, Miss Rosa tripped gaily back to our friend and embraced him, as if she was the most loving, affectionate lady in the world—as if it was a regular case of *Perish Savoy!* with regard to the gentleman's feelings. And Puffing Billy, late Owen Ashford, having at length got Mr. Bunting home, he packed up his grandfather's Daftun and sent it by book-post to Mr. Ballivant, in corroboration of what he had said about the capabilities of his forest. And Rosa, reviewing the past, really thought that the gipsey's prophecy was going to come true. And considering that Ballivant was satisfied, we really see no reason for forbidding the banns.

Let us now return to other parties who will be instrumental in unravelling the mystery.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

THE DUKE OF TERGIVERSATION'S VISITING LIST.

The Juvenile day will have prepared our readers for the approach of that festive season, when bitter frosts, and tradesmen's bills, are supposed to promote hilarity, and when those who have anything to give away think that now is the time for doing it. Christmas, in short, was coming; though it is but justice to the Comet year to say, that it was a very different winter to the one that succeeded it. Indeed, the Comet year had no winter at all. Be it remembered, that with its successor (1859—60) the first fall of snow was on the 21st of October, and the last on the 28th of May—the week after Epsom.

Among those who were anxious to increase their difficulties in this our Comet year was our noble friend, the Duke of Tergiversation, who thought to propitiate tradesmen, and smooth all parties over with a ball and supper. Perhaps he was moved to this end by a desire to get rid of our fox-shooting friend, the Prince Pirouetteza, who, independently of being always in the way, was not quite so cleanly in his habits as

the Duke could wish. And though his Grace had no objection to helping Lady Honoria Hopkins to a husband, he did not want to be the victim of a procrastinated courtship. So he determined to try what a ball and supper would do in the way of acceleration.

We often think it must be a difficult thing for a great man to find the exact equator of his visiting list—the broad line of demarcation that admits happy Brown and yet excludes poor pouting Jones and Robinson. The Duke and Duchess of Tergiversation managed their popularity matters upon a sort of debtor and creditor principle, those from whom they expected to get anything being sure to be asked, while those who had been used were postponed for further consideration, or until it was seen what the first shower of cards produced.

The process of filtration somewhat resembled the passing of a bill through Parliament, the measure originating in the Lower House, viz., in that of Mr. Cucumber, who, with the aid of his old visiting lists, arranged a new one of all the producible people in the country, with such observations as occurred to him in the course of his references to poll-books, and the notes he kept of the conversations he heard or what other people told him. To this he added a supplementary list of officers and parties who might be brought from a distance, a ball at a Castle being always very attractive. The list was then presented to his Grace, who went through the names seriatim, hearing the *pros* and *cons* on each party, and finally handing it to the Duchess, who went through it in her own fashion, perhaps restoring names that the Duke had struck out, and striking out names that the Duke had retained. A dissolution of Parliament appearing probable, and the Duke having certain ambitious views on the county, the list was now scanned with more than ordinary care and attention, his Grace and Mr. Cucumber devoting a whole morning to the subject. The A's were disposed of without any difficulty.

His Grace then turned over the page and got among the B's.—Berrys, Beauchamps, Bedfords, Binks, Browns, Brews, Bushells, Butterwells, Bedingfields, Beningboroughs, Bowderoukins, Mr. and Mrs. "Well, now, what are the Bowderonkin's queried for?" asked the Duke.

"Bowderonkins, Bowderonkins—'scuse me—but I think the name will be Roukins, Bowderoukins," replied Mr. Cucumber glancing at the list as he spoke.

"Bowderoukins it is," assented his Grace, looking at it again. "Well, what is the objection to the Bowderoukins?"

"No objection whatever, your Grace, that I know of; only they have not been here before."

"Haven't they. There will be some reason for that then. Turn to the poll-book, and see how he voted."

"He was not on the Register at the last election, your Grace," replied Mr. Cucumber.

"Is he now?"

"Yes, your Grace."

"And nothing against him?"

"Nothing whatever, your Grace."

"Have them by all means," replied the Duke. "Secure him against another time, you know;" so saying, the Duke struck his pen through the query, and proceeded with the list.

"Boyston," presently read his Grace. "Boyston, Boyston; is that the gentleman they call the Jug?"

"It is, your Grace," smiled Mr. Cucumber.

"What is there a query to his name for?" asked the Duke.

"Oh, that is for the Duchess," replied Mr. Cucumber.

"Her Grace objected to his nankin trowsers on a former occasion, and that is merely to draw her Grace's attention to the name."

"Well, we will leave the Duchess to settle the point herself," said the Duke, passing on, adding, he "Musn't come without something of the sort at all events."

"Certainly not, your Grace," replied Mr. Cucumber with an emphasis.

"Bunting,—who is Mr. Bunting?" now asked the Duke.

"Mr. Bunting is a very genteel young gentleman, who is down suitoring Miss McDermott of Privett Grove."

"Ah, the little blue-eyed girl, who comes out hunting?" observed the Duke.

"The same," replied Mr. Cucumber.

"I thought she was going to marry the banker's son," observed his Grace.

"Well, its between the two," rejoined Mr. Cucumber; "even betting I believe which gets her."

"You are sure Mr. Bunting is all right?" said the Duke, adding, "I shouldn't like to have any convict captains * down here."

"Oh, all right, all right," replied Mr. Cucumber, confidently. "I've ascertained all that—quite the gentleman, quite the gentleman."

So Mr. Bunting was passed for a ticket, subject of course to the approval of the Duchess.

The B's being disposed of with Mr. Bunting, the C's came next. The Crofts, the Cranes, the Cambos, the Churchhills, the Cheadles, the Cutlers, the Coopers, the Cottons, the Chatterleys.

"Well, what are Chatterleys queried for?" asked the Duke.

"The Chatterleys are queried, your Grace, because you struck them off after the last fête. Mr. Chatterley voted wrong."

"Then if they were struck off before, what occasion is there to put them on this list?" asked the Duke.

* Sir Eardley Wilmot, in his amusing Life of Mr. Assheton Smith, relates how a certain notorious house-breaking, betting, bank-robbing convict once dined with a party at Tedworth House (Mr. Smith's) under the assumed name of Captain Montague.

"They have been presented at Court since," replied Mr. Cucumber.

"Have they?" replied the Duke; "so much the worse; shows they don't know their places—shan't come here." His Grace striking his pen through their names, saying, "Every pig-jobber goes to Court now-a-days."

The unhappy Chatterleys, Mr., Mrs., and two Misses, being thus summarily disposed of, the Duke proceeded with the list, retaining of course the names of our friends the Goldspinks, Mr., Mrs., and Mr. Junior; also the McDermotts, Mrs. and Miss, Mr. Jovey Jessop, and many others in whom the reader will take no interest.

When his Grace at length arrived at the W's, and found the name of Mr. Brown White alone, he paused, for he recollected Black White's gallant riding with Mr. Jovey Jessop's hounds, and thought he ought to be rewarded.

"Mr. Black White's name not down," observed his Grace, looking up at Mr. Cucumber.

"Mr. Black White,—Mr. Black White; no, your Grace. Mr. Black White's name is not down. Your Grace said none of the neck-of-venison gentlemen need be put on to the ball list."

"Well," said the Duke, "I suppose there would be some reason for it. However,

'To err is human, to forgive divine.'

We will advance Black White this time;" so saying, his Grace added Mr. Black White's name to the list of guests.

"Mrs. Black White, then—would your Grace put Mrs. Black White on?"

"Mrs. Black White? No, certainly not," replied the Duke; "got a brandy nose and wears a bad front. Can't bear a woman with a brandy nose and a bad front." So Mrs. Black White was rejected.

The important document was then ready for the Duchess' inspection, upon whom Mr. Cucumber waited, and went through it again, explaining the additions and objections—Bowderoukins, Chatterleys, Naukins, Black White, and all. When the Duchess inquired for Mrs. Black White, and heard the reason why she had been rejected, her Grace placed her name on the list, saying, "What has the Duke to do with her bad front?" adding, "she may not always wear the same one, you know." So Mrs. Black White was rescued at the last stage. The list being thus duly passed, a suitable number of imposing-looking cards were then produced, and the process of filling up the invitations commenced, and proceeded to the usual postal conclusion. Great was the emptying of the Castle bag into the country post-office, it being no longer thought derogatory, as it once was, to send invitations by other than a special messenger.

CHAPTER XC.

CARDS FOR A BALL.

What a commotion it caused in the country when the great ducal cards with butter-pat-like seals permeated through the post office. How, when it transpired, as most things do transpire, that they were coming, the doubtful ones chucked up their chins, and pretended they would not go if invited; how the sure not to be invited said there was no fear of their being asked; and how the safe ones speculated upon whether Mrs. So-and-So would be there.

It spoils some people's pleasure to find others at parties who they think would be better away. The exclusiveness of the thing is half the enjoyment to many. If the Duchess had submitted her list to the revision of the country at large it would have been extremely select at the end of the operation—reduced to something like a fox and goose board at the end of a game. Her Grace's boudoir would have held the party.

Now there was a great to-do in all the country houses, Mr. Cucumber, having told a dozen people—all in strict confidence, of course—who in their turns told a dozen more, till there was not a milliner's girl or a seamstress in the district who did not know what was going to happen. Indeed it is these poor creatures who are mainly interested in such events, for their services are all wanted by everybody at once, and there is little rest for them until the ball is over. But we have not got to their miseries yet, the spasms and convulsions of the country having yet to be undergone. Let us endeavour to describe them.

Mrs. Chatterley, who was what the Duke would call an "ambitious woman," said in reply to the expression of a doubt on the part of Miss Mary, that "Of course they would be asked. How was a ball to be made up if it wasn't from people like themselves, the court set." And she opened the letter-bag at breakfast the next morning with as much confidence of finding a card as a fisherman puts his hand into the landing-net, who has seen his trout flickering in it the minute before. What ho! no card!

The *Times*, three tradesmen's bills, and a wine merchant's circular. Mrs. Chatterley said nothing, showed no symptom of disappointment, nor did the young ladies, but all had their unpleasant misgivings. Mr. Chatterley chuckled to think he would escape the terrible balloon-like ball dresses.

Next day was the same, no card, but an increased supply of Christmas medicine. Still there was no public demonstration, though the young ladies confided their worst fears to each other in private. On the third morning, however, it being known that the Netherwoods and others had received their invitations, Mrs. Chatterley on emptying the bag carefully, observed that the Castle ball must be a tradesmen's one as they had not sent them cards. And this view, being adopted by the ladies, and endorsed by Mr. Chatterley, who observed it was most likely a new way the Duke had adopted for paying his old Christmas bills, the ladies ordered the barouche, and went driving about, tossing up their heads, when asked if they were going, as if they were many cuts above such an assembly.

The Bowderoukinses, on the other hand, were delighted when they got their card—a large glazed paste-board with the Duke and Duchess of Tergiversation requesting the honour of Mr. and Mrs. Bowderoukins's company to a ball and supper! Well, wonders would never cease! They had always gone upon the "'umble tack," talking of the Tergiversations as people many cuts above them. Now places were changed, and the Duke and Duchess absolutely considered it honour to be visited by them. At least they said so, and that too in print, which everybody believes.

"WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE, MISTRESS BOWDEROUKINS?" demanded our fat friend, as he saw his delighted spouse coming grinning along from the larder at post time with the important document in her hand.

"Guess!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, putting it behind her.

"Letter from the Lord Chamberlain, perhaps?" suggested Mr. Bowderoukins, ironically, well knowing what it was.

"No! guess again!" replied Mrs. Bowderoukins.

"Well, perhaps Mr. Sugars, the grocer's bill," said he, thinking to humour the delusion.

"No!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, unable any longer to restrain herself, "card from the Duke and Duchess of Tergiversation!" putting it full before him.

"Only think!" ejaculated Bowderoukins.

"Only think!" responded his ecstatic spouse; "what will Mrs. Tom Tucker say?"

"Death of her," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, rubbing his fat hands.

"What shall I put on, Mr. Bowderoukins?" now demanded his smiling wife.

"Put on, my dear," replied Bowderoukins, well knowing what that question would lead up to—"put on, my dear?—There's your cinnamon-coloured satin, or your striped—what do call it?"

"Oh, Mr. Bowderoukins, the striped is a morning dress."

"Well, then, there is your fine green genoa velvet—give it a turn."

"Oh, Mr. Bowderoukins, I have worn it till everybody is tired of seeing me in it. It is the dress that that odious Mrs. Cambo called

me the Emerald Isle in. I'm sure you wouldn't wish me to go a figure the first time, Mr. Bowderoukins."

"Certainly not, my dear," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, "certainly not, my dear; but you must not cut the Duchess out in her own house, you know."

"Not much fear of that," replied Mrs. Bowderoukins; "but I really think I should have a new dress on this occasion, dear Bowderoukins. Don't you think I should, Bowderoukins?"

"Well, my dear, I don't know, I'm sure, my dear. You are the best judge, my dear—only it's candle-light, my dear—things look very well by candle-light that look only middling by daylight, my dear; my black shorts are not very good when you come to examine them by daylight."

"Oh, Mr. Bowderoukins, you don't understand these things—gentlemen never do. You know, I must have a new dress, sooner or later, Mr. Bowderoukins; so why not have it now when it will be a credit to wear it?"

"Well, my dear, you know best," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, shuffling away with his newspaper, seeing it was of no use contending with a lady who has made up her mind. And the same post that conveyed their answer to the Castle, carried a letter to Madame Gigot, in Geranium Crescent, for a new ball dress of the most fashionable order, to be down without fail in three days.

Mr. Jovey Jessop's and his Jug's cards were sent in the same envelope, the Duchess having heard of the Jug's frequent peregrinations to Privett Grove, and relying upon the ladies smartening him up. It was not that her grace objected so much to the Jug's nankeens as to his not having them clean, the Jug having been chucked out of his buggy on a former occasion and alighting on his knees, had gone about all the evening with two great mud stains, looking for all the world like a mole-catcher without his traps.

Sivin-and-four of course had a card, including Mrs. Sivin-and-four and our esteemed young friend Jasper. "Sivin and four 's elivin and sivin 's eighteen, that card's from the castle," said he, as he saw it lying conspicuously on the drawing-room table, "and sivin 's twenty-eight, wish I mayn't have to pay for the party;" so saying he trudged down stairs into the Bank to have a look at the ledger.

"Sivin and four 's elivin, and sivinty-sivin 's eighty-eight, just as I thought," said he, surveying the deficiency creeping on again. Wish he would pay up instead of keeping one out of one's bed at night, incurrin no end of expense of conveyance, and gloves, and nobody knows what. Really think I'll say no, and write a line drawing his 'tention to his account, for unless one 's always at him he thinks he has nothin to do but draw, and the money will be forthcoming—just as if one had a well to draw it out of. When, however, answering time came, Mrs. Goldspink accepted in the names of all

three, and begged the banker to keep his account for a more favourable opportunity.

Words cannot depict Mrs. Black White's astonishment at receiving a card, and that not a supplementary one, but sent in the first issue. Mrs. Brown White had always twitted Mrs. Black White with not being castle company, and now she was suddenly elevated into equality with herself. She could not resist walking over to Belladonna Cottage to see her; but Mrs. Brown White suspecting the object of her errand, took the wind out of her sails, by saying she supposed she would have got a card for the great to-do at the castle, adding, with a yawn, as if she was out every night in her life, that she didn't know that Brown and she would be going, they had been so often that they were about tired of the thing. Still she would advise Mrs. Black to go, as she had never been there, and the castle was worth seeing, especially under such favourable circumstances, and altogether she patronised her not a little. So Mrs. Black White did not take much by her mission. However, what with those that were asked, and those that were not asked, and those that thought they ought to be asked, and those who would not have gone if they had been asked, there was a pretty commotion engendered throughout the country; and fashion books, and pattern books, were in great demand among the fair, and many were the orders for dresses, all of course wanted immediately.

CHAPTER XCI.

THE DUCAL DIFFICULTIES.

LET us now take a glance at the domestic affairs at the castle. Getting up a ball is generally excitement enough for most people, but the Duke and Duchess of Tergiversation's excitement was considerably increased by the difficulty there was in getting the necessary supplies. Country tradespeople can seldom afford to give long credit, and Mr. Cucumber's applications and orders were too generally met by the production of some long-standing bill which it would be a real convenience to the parties to have settled. The Duke was a great economist up to a sovereign. That sum exceeded he went right overhead in extravagance. He would criticise the board at a toll-bar from top to bottom, to be sure he wasn't defrauded of a halfpenny, while he would think nothing of ordering a couple of hundred pounds' worth of cut flowers for an evening party.

"Flat," said his Grace to Mr. Hydrangia, the Bayswater florist, as he accompanied that genius on a tour of inspection of the receiving rooms, on the evening of a great London ball.

"Flat," repeated he as they got into the drawing-room.

"Don't know your Grace," replied Mr. Hydrangia, "there are two hundred pounds' worth of exotics here."

"Then put two hundred pounds' worth more," replied the Duke, without a moment's hesitation.

"How much?" exclaimed he, cantering up Purbeck Bar on his way home, from half a-day's hunting at Sandforth Heath.

"Tuppence!" replied old deaf Turner, the toll-keeper, holding out his hand for the money.

"Tup-pence! it is but three half-pence surely," replied the Duke, pulling up, and going attentively through the list on the board—broad wheels, narrow wheels, exemptions and all.

"Ah, well, twopence it is," at length replied he, coming to the horse department—"There 's your money!" adding, as he cantered away, "The man who would rob me of a single halfpenny, would rob me of all I 'm worth in the world."

It was seeing the Duke at one of these wrangles, coupled with his own innate regard for the siller, that made Mr. Haggish so obstreperous about the "green silk whopcord," that terrible outlay that had cost the Duke eighteenpence. But we are getting to the out-door department, instead of confining ourselves to the internal arrangements of the Castle. Well, the Duke's credit, we are sorry to say, was not very great, but he never would want for anything on that account; and on Cucumber devolved the responsibility of seeing the orders executed. The Duke was well cared for too, and many were the enquiries made after him by the Assurance Office people in London, the directors of some of which had proposed to club together to take him a-moor to keep him in health, thinking the battueing was not sufficiently severe exercise.

There is no doubt that London is fast absorbing the retail trade of the country, and will do so entirely if shopkeepers persist in making summer hideous by sending in their bills half-yearly and dunning accordingly; but in a case like the present, where the entertainment was given as much to procure votes as to promote gaiety, it would never do to throw the patronage away upon the metropolis, and come what would the necessary supplies must be procured on the spot. Still a country confectioner's is a miserable affair, little in the shop, and nothing behind, though there is never any want of enterprise in the way of taking large orders, the parties relying on the assistance of all the drunken out-of-place creatures, and trusting to excuses, and "the cat," for getting out of their difficulties. The cat got in at the last moment —the cat upset the cream—the cat eat the jelly—the cat destroyed the game; there never was such a cat.

In the Duke's case it was not so much the cookery that was wanted —for that could be done in the Castle—as the material wherewith to cook. When Betty Barns could get three and sixpence for her fowls at Jollyfield market, she was not going to send them on any visionary prospect of some day receiving three and nine from Mr. Cucumber for them. So that gentleman issued his orders without much success, for country people hang together, and if one says no, they generally all say no. If, therefore, the pleasure of a ball is enhanced by the trouble

it gives, this ought to have been a very enjoyable one. A ball at Willis's Rooms is not considered equivalent to one in a private house, simply, we suppose, because all the paraphernalia is at hand, no taking doors off their hinges, no turning master's study upside down, or making the library into a room for the ladies. So with the supper—supper for so many—bill for supper for so many—an order and a cheque—comprise the trouble—does the whole business. That however will only do for the division of labour peculiar to the unlimited means and appliances of the capital. The country must always be dependent upon separate purveyors, unless indeed parties choose to entrust the arrangements to some great London house; but then what a thing it would be if it should come a snow storm, and the supper be drifted up short of its destination! A ball without a supper would never do. The Duke of Tergiversation, however, had enough work with Hydrangia and people when in London, without troubling them to come into the country, so he drew his supplies from native industry.

First and foremost undoubtedly is the champagne. There must be plenty of champagne, at least, plenty of pop, fizz, banging, for as it is not all gold that glistens, so it is not all *grand mousseux* that sparkles. The wine, the Castle cellars supplied, and Mr. Cucumber and the butler understood the judicious mixture—when to interpolate a few bottles of grape, when to sow the pure supply stronger. Lights come next. There must be a perfect blaze of light, and in these glorious days when competing companies almost force their goods upon the public, sending their "cash prices" and their "booking prices," as if determined to have an order, there can be little difficulty in procuring an abundant supply; and Cucumber gave magnificent orders for transparent wax, and China wax, and Ceylon wax, and the finest Colza oil, all of which came down carefully packed, with obsequious invoices, in some instances the railway-carriage paid—for weak-minded tradesmen are terribly obnoxious to the influence of rank. Next in importance to the wine and light is the music, and whether or not we have recently turned a military nation, there can be no doubt that we have greatly advanced as a musical one. There is scarcely a village of any size without its band, and where nothing but cock and dog fighting went on, and nothing but bacchanalian songs were heard, we have now the notes of soft music wafted on the breeze. We cannot but think if our legislators were to increase the harmless enjoyments of the people—say throw open the Museums, the Picture Galleries, the Crystal Palace on a Sunday—they would do them far more real service than by burthening them with a troublesome franchise that they do not require.

Well, the wine, lights and music being procured, the delicacies of the season—the beef, mutton, and cheese, as the sailor described a sumptuous repast he had had—were next considered, and Haggish was

charged to make predatory excursions among the poultry whenever he went out with the hounds. Eggs, butter, and cream, too, were sought far and wide. So what with contributions on the spot, and consignments from town, things at length assumed the dimensions of a grand entertainment, and the Castle looked as if it would stand a prolonged siege, or sustain a very heavy invasion.

CHAPTER XCII.

THE GENERAL DIFFICULTIES.

Having glanced at the Duke's difficulties, let us take a look at those of the guests. By the time the cards became due, the winter had just got to that critical period when we may look for all sorts of weather within the short space of four-and-twenty hours,—rain, snow, frost, sunshine; hunting on one side of a hill, skating on the other. The weather, however, does not in general make much matter to the ladies —so long as they can get into their carriages and out again, they do not care much what it is. It is the gentlemen who are always looking at their aneroids and land marks speculating on the atmosphere, and calculating the damage to their invaluable harness and horses—horses that they wouldn't take any money for.

And in truth, those who went to the Duke's on a ball night had needs look about them, for the stable accommodation was scanty at best, and three in a stall nothing uncommon. Providing proper stable accommodation for the visitors' horses is another of the difficulties peculiar to country gaiety. Mr. Willis would look rather blank if all the coachmen setting down at his rooms in King's Street were to want billets for their horses and something for themselves. The Duke looked upon the matter in a metropolitan point of view—he didn't ask the horses—they formed no part of the entertainment—could not be a horse quadrille if it was ever so; therefore, after such accommodation as the master of the horse and Mr. Haggish could spare was filled, the comers were left a good deal to chance and the care of the neighbouring publicans. First come, first served was generally the order of the day.

A ball being to the ladies a good deal what a fox hunt is to the gentlemen, there was a great demand for quarters and filling of country houses for miles around the Castle, which on the afternoon of the day somewhat resembled a fortress in a state of siege, the martello tower-like dresses of the ladies contributing to the idea. Then the fever of anxiety was increased in some houses on finding that the martello towers could not by any means be got into the carriages—at least not

in the proportions they had theretofore been, when dresses were smaller and more controllable.

A set dinner-party on a ball night, is always an undesirable, uncomfortable affair in the country, and had better never be attempted. The ladies are always in a fidget about something, and mysterious messages are getting constantly delivered, causing abrupt risings and departures, and perhaps frowning brows on the return. Then there is that constant looking at watches, and asking the gentlemen what o'clock it is, no lady ever relying upon her own watch; and evident desire to be among the laces and flounces of the toilette instead of the flowers and fricandeaux of the dinner-table.

Young gentlemen are not much easier, and long to be at the looking-glass instead of the wine-glass—not an undesirable change from the days when it was thought necessary to be well primed before going to a ball.

Pater Familias generally does the bulk of his dressing before dinner —all most likely save putting on the immaculate tie and the No. 1 coat and vest—for he finds that stooping encourages blood to the head rather than digestion; and just as he has imbibed his usual allowance of wine, and about read himself asleep, the door opens and in glides a lady so large and gorgeous, so differently dressed to the one who went out, that he has to rub his knuckles well into his eyes in order to recognise her person. "What! Mrs. Sunnyfield, is that you?" exclaims he.

"Yes, Sun, my dear, it's me. Shouldn't you be getting ready? The carriage will be round directly."

"Well, that *is* a dress!" exclaims Sun, jumping up and hurrying out of the room, wondering what sort of a figure it will cut in the bill. He then dives into his clothes, and, putting himself into his paletôt, resigns himself complacently to the hands of his fair executioner.

It is a pity the coachmakers had not foreseen the rage of crinoline, so as to have shaped their vehicles accordingly. The hooded and headed contrivances of the country—the turbot-tubs upon wheels—are but ill calculated to convey the expanded gig umbrellas they are now called upon to hold. Moreover, the buckled and buttoned things are seldom wholly proof against weather. They may be all very well in the day-time, when a traveller can see the coming storm and meet it accordingly; but it is not nice to drive eight or ten miles in the dark, with the keen wind whistling through its pet aperture into one's ear, or for a lady to feel the drop, drop, drop of the neatsfoot-oiled water from the head upon her rich pink silk or beautiful moire antique. All this, too, perhaps amid the comfortable laudations of the owner at the convenience of a carriage that can be made either a close or an open one at pleasure.

Then the job carriages; what work there is with the job carriages! What resuscitation of old post-chaises, impromptu-ising of post-boys,

and impressing of horses—animals that scarcely know what harness is are somehow accepted as safe and sufficient security. If the history of all the quadrupeds that run in public conveyances were known, people would not be so fond of getting into them. Yet somehow the good-natured public seem to take it all for granted, and the crazier a concern is, the more they seem to like it. Look at the ram-shackling things that go out of a country town on a market day, piled up on the roof like a Covent Garden cabbage cart. But let us off to the ball and get there as best we can. And to so absorbing an event let us devote a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE DUCHESS OF TERGIVERSATION'S BALL.

The Duchess of Tergiversation of course had fixed her ball for the full moon, relying upon that kindly planet keeping matters right; and certainly up to the afternoon of the day things wore a very promising appearance. But the moon had scarcely gained her ascendancy, ere that encircling haze, so popular with sportsmen—so inimical to dresses, indicated a change; and on the melon-frames, the turbot-tubs, and the various vehicles chartered for the occasion came round to their respective doors, a very decided rain was established. Then the ladies, with much the air of peacocks striving for a port on a windy day, having at length encircled themselves into their carriages, the gentlemen dived in at random, execrating the weather and the capacious crinolines, and objurgating the Duchess for her confounded condescension—wished she had kept her cards to herself. And the whole country was then presently alive with the rumbling of wheels, the shining lights of carriages—apparently stationary, but in reality moving—surprising the country and pike people, many of which latter came to open their gates in very light attire. So the approaching forces neared the Castle just like sportsmen proceeding to a meet—some parties waxing nervous the nearer they got to it. Great people have very little idea what awe they inspire.

Fair reader, were you ever the first to arrive at a ball or other place of public entertainment? seen the wild hurry consequent on the finishing stroke—the getting into place of the various actors—the bewigged and broad-backed coachman at the door, the powdered footmen within, the out-of-livery gentlemen further back? If so we are inclined to suspect you have not repeated the experiment a second time. And yet somebody must come first; but still there is no occasion to arrive before you are asked. It is generally observable at London balls that

the first persons to come are those whom the mistress least wishes to see, namely, some unfortunate country cousins whom it has been seriously debated whether to have or not, and who now show their gratitude by making themselves as conspicuous as possible, in all the eccentricity of bygone fashions. For though they have got new clothes, they are husbanding them to take back into the country—nobody, as they say, knowing them in London.

The first to arrive at the Castle on this auspicious night were our friends the Bowderoukinses, though they had had a desperate dispute about the propriety of punctuality—Mr. Bowderoukins insisting that it was only a proper mark of respect to attend punctually upon a first invitation, Mrs. Bowderoukins maintaining that a ball was not like a dinner, and that people might go to a ball any time they liked, provided they did not go before the hour fixed.

However, Bowderoukins being master of his own horse, had the steady family nag in the vehicle at a minute to the time he fixed, and not being a man to rest quiet under impulsive circumstances, Mrs. Bowderoukins thought it best to have herself in her rich rustling red moire antique dress too. And considering the horse was but a slow one, to whom the heavy roads were anything but familiar, it said something for Jonathan's jehuship that he brought them up under the grand portico within a quarter of an hour of his estimate. Then, the leathern appliances being loosened, the oven door was opened, and Mr. and Mrs. Bowderoukins turned out as best they could, just as another horse's head poked up behind to claim the honour of second place. The ports were then opened, and from a dribbling stream of carriages the line gradually became closer and more connected, until a slowly moving procession was formed, reaching from the Castle to the centre gates.

But for the gleam of lights and the profusion of gaudy servants lining the spacious armour-decked entrance hall, Mrs. Bowderoukins would have admonished Bowdey on the impropriety of their early coming; as it was she submitted to the almost mute guidance of sundry white-kidded hands, all delicately indicating the way to the cloak and tea room; while Bowdey followed on, blinking like an owl suddenly turned out of his ivy bush against the radiance of the mid-day sun. Even here our friends were too soon, for only one pretty maid had got herself into her white muslin with cherry-coloured ribbons, and though the tea apparatus was on the counter-like table, the Bohea was not even put into the pots.

The fact was the Duchess was behind-hand with her toilette, having scolded her French maid well for putting her out the wrong dress, and the backwardness of the main-spring had communicated itself to the rest of the works of the Castle. Mrs. Bowderoukins, therefore, finding that she could give herself "pause," deliberately sat down, determined to "tea" for half an hour if necessary.

She had not long to wait, for first one young group of maidens and then another came trooping in, all fuss and flowers, and gig umbrellas, chattering and wondering and wanting their beaux. Then the ladies began shaking hands, asking after the absent, and expressing their pleasure at seeing each other—some inwardly wishing their rivals were further. And they got so chatty and agreeable, and reinforcements poured in so quickly that they seemed to have forgotten all about the ball, so much so indeed, that her grace having at length descended, magnificently radiant of course, wanted people to admire her freshness, so she converted Mr. Cucumber into a gentleman usher of the black rod, and sent him to summon the guests. Whereupon, there was a great drawing on of gloves, arranging of lace, twirling of hoops, making way for each other to go first—for as it has often been observed, there is more trouble in marshalling a party of justices' wives than a bevy of duchesses.

Then the rustling commenced amid the guidance of voluminous garments, and names were passed on from footman to footman placed at intervals on the stairs, until the guests reached the elegant groom of the chamber, whose attire far eclipsed that of most of the visitors. The Duchess was standing in state, the centre of a semicircle, formed of the Duke, Lord Marchhare, and Lady Honoria Hopkins, all splendidly attired—the Duke and his Lordship after the manner of the cocktails, wearing the full dress uniform of the hunt—orange coloured coats, with cherry coloured linings collars and cuffs, white shorts, and white silk stockings. The Duchess dressed in a splendid new double pink satin dress with rich bouillons of tulle and point lace, a magnificent diamond stomacher, and a tiara of diamonds on her head—the light of a neighbouring cut-glass chandelier being enlisted to perfect the radiance of the group.

The Duchess was a capital hand at measuring affability, and could do the smiling and freezing, almost with the same face. She could also apportion her politeness with all the accuracy of a letter weigher —an ounce to Mrs. Young, two to Miss Springfield, three to Mr. Addleton, none to Brown White. It was as good as a play and a farce put together to stand aside and mark the trepidation depicted on the countenances of the comers, and the look of joy that prevailed after they had passed the dread ordeal.

This sort of thing, however, is not peculiar to the country. Most people have some donnish acquaintance, who patronise them in the country and shy them in town; and in these days of general locomotion it is as well to ascertain who they are, so as to avoid a rebuff. There is never much difficulty in doing so, for they are always pretty notorious—indeed you see by a certain stately gathering as they approach, and a sort of semicircular movement that they do not "wish to detain you." If you chance to meet them in society they accord you a very stiff bow, as much as to say, "no shaking hands here, if you please,"

or, "I think, sir, your place might have been better filled in this house." These are the charmers of society to whom literary people who draw from the life are so much indebted for character and incident. Perhaps, however, there is no more valuable acquirement than that of knowing when to use the hat and when the hand.

The Duchess meanwhile continues her reception; bows, and smiles, and curtsies, and shakes of the hand, with here and there a convenient obliviousness. The Smiths, the Fields, the Swineys, the Dockets, and the Dunns pass unseen, but the Beauchamps, and the Bedfords, are detained for a hug. Then the Langdales, the Holleydales, the Netherwoods, the Wheelers, the Cambos, the Cheadles, and the Thomsons come trooping in and pass rapidly on, while the Dingwalls and Woodroses, who are tall and good looking, are kept for a while in the neighbourhood of the select circle.

The flow of company now becomes unbroken and continuous, names get mixed and greetings misappropriated; but the large apartments with the noble picture-gallery in aid are far more than sufficient to accommodate all comers. The guests disperse and range the rooms, wandering about like cattle entering a strange field. Lord Marchhare is now beauing the beautiful Miss Rebecca Isaacs, who has come down from town with uncle Joseph Samuel to try to get pay for that new Swaneveldt his grace pressed so much on the admiration of his banker when he called about his little balance. But where is that worthy gentleman with his sivin and four troublesome calculations? Oh, there he is, shorts and all, yawning already, with Mrs. Goldspink in a red and yellow dress with a portentous turban on her head. Sivin-and-four can't make out why people turn night into day for the pleasure of dancing, while Mrs. Sivin-and-four, who is full of furnishing, goes prying about looking at and feeling everything, thinking and wondering what will do for their new house at Garlandale.

And now, after a few prefatory twangs, a perfect crash of music, such as only a stout country band can produce, bursts forth, drawing all the ambulatory guests into the beautiful octagon ball-room, whose white and gold walls are lit up in a style extremely inimical to dirty dresses. In the company pour at all the four doors, and the thing immediately assumes the proportions of a grand ball. Not flat at all. And as the vigorous band ply the overture to the Traviata Quadrille, the grinning Prince Pirouetteza pilots in the Duchess, looking a very different prince to what he was when getting bumped on the unruly Timour the Tartar. The Duke, as we said before, had had about enough of his highness, and meant the ball to be the grand concluding event of the visit. The ladies, however, pulled the other way, especially the Lady Honoria Hopkins, who would rather be the wife of a dirty prince than the widow of a clean Englishman. So whenever the Duke asked Cucumber in the ladies' presence if he knew anything about His Highness's movements, the Duchess would exclaim,

"Oh, dear Duke, never mind about that! never mind about that! I'm sure he's no trouble to any one."

The Prince is now a tremendous swell, with his stiff wrist-bands turned half way up to his elbows, and his broad chest glittering with jewelry and orders, real or imaginary. He had consumed five wax candles, to say nothing of a blazing fire, in getting himself up to his satisfaction, and in capering and attitudinising before the cheval glass in his bed-room. And now the various quadrilles being arranged, and the anxious musicians having taken breath, at a clap of the Prince's well-gloved hands, a start is effected; and away the ladies dart and glide, and the gentlemen dive and duck amid the masses of tulle and crinoline to the sound. The ball is then established, and the late timid ones are astonished that they should have thought there was anything to be afraid of. A galop follows the quadrilles, and introduces fresh comers.

Who is this pleasant looking man in a black coat with a white waistcoat and white cravat, with whom everybody shakes hands as he advances quietly up the room, with his Gibus hat in his hand? Jovey

Jessop ! so it is—Jovey without his Jug. What has got the old boy? Oh, yonder he is, beauing Mrs. McDermott, who really looks quite handsome in her new light gray moire antique with broad black lace flounces, and a white feather wreath around her head. And what a swell old Tom is himself, fine new blue coat with a velvet collar and bright buttons, white vest, new nankins with shiny shoes, and open clocked gauze silk stockings. We will be bound to say, the old fellow thinks they will serve a double purpose, do for the ball to-night, and to be married in, if Mrs. McDermott is agreeable. He looks quite respectable and really by no means ugly. The Duchess vouchsafed him a hand as he came in, and said she was glad to see him at the Castle, quite a different reception to the one he got when he had been down on his knees. And really when we look at Mrs. McDermott and Tom we think we see a similarity between them—a sort of Mr. and Mrs. Jug-ishness.

But see ! who have we here? Who is this velvety Tom-cat-looking man, all silk, satin, and jewelry, with a pink shirt front worked with festoons of flowers and humming birds. We have seen him before, heard that sardonic laugh, watched that tortuous twirl. It can't be O'Dicey? Yet O'Dicey we believe it is. O'Dicey it is, as we live! Well, who would have thought of seeing O'Dicey at a Duke's. How came he here? We will tell you, gentle reader. That great capitalist Mr. Wanless, is going to lend his Grace three hundred and fifty thousand pounds, to relieve him from the Insurance Offices, and other troublesome people. Meanwhile the Duke is going to put his name to a little paper for the great British merchant to manipulate, and O'Dicey is down with the proper stamps for the purpose. We wish his grace may get the proceeds.

That, however, is no business of ours. But watch O'Dicey, watch the charming impudence with which he approaches and greets the victim of the mutton chop dinner. One would think their positions had been reversed, and that O'Dicey was the loser instead of the winner.

"Holloa, old boy!" exclaims he, thrusting his hand vehemently into our hero's, "hollon, old boy! how goes it? Dash it, I've been thinking of you this I don't know how long, wondering when you were coming to have your revenge." And thereupon O'Dicey shook our friend's hand so severely as almost made him doubt whether O'Dicey was the rogue the world gave him credit, or rather, discredit for being.

"Well, and have they got you spliced yet?" asks O'Dicey, with a significant glance at our friend; "have they got you spliced yet?"

"No, not yet," replies Jasper, in a tone that as good as said "I am going to be, though."

"Why, what a slow coach you are!" exclaimed O'Dicey, tickling Jasper in the ribs with his fore-finger; "I thought you'd have been

old father Caudle by this time. Where's the lady?" continued he, glancing hastily round the room.

"There," replied Jasper, nodding promiscuously at a group of sprightly waltzers.

"Where?" retorted O'Dicey, not being able to recognise her.

"Here!" replied Jasper, as our fair heroine now whisked past in the scarcely-board-touching Violante Valse.

"So it is!" replied O'Dicey, now watching the floating of the triple-skirted tulle dress looped up with flowers, adding, "but she's got her hair in ringlets! What's that for?"

"Because I please," replied Jasper.

"All right," rejoined O'Dicey; adding, "glad you've cut out that man-coquette, who is only fit for a dancing-master," alluding to Mr. Bunting, in whose grasp the lovely Rosa was then revolving, her bright eyes flashing dangerously through the fluttering graces of her curls.

There was some truth in what Jasper said about the ringlets, for we may mention that Mr. Ballivant had been over to Privett Grove again, and his report of the Scotch property had turned the scales again in Jasper's favour. Otherwise there is no saying but Rosa might have had her hair plain, which Mr. Bunting always told her she looked much the best in. And here a word about the property.

Our friend Jock Haggish says that if ever he wants to get acquainted with any gentleman's private affairs, he either gans to the "Vawlet what's a coourtin' of the lady's maid, or else to yen o' them Writer Deavils i' the next toon," and it so happened that Mr. Ballivant applied to the same "Writer Deavil" who had been similarly employed by another party (Biter and Co., we believe) on a previous occasion, who wrote word back that though he would not say Mr. Bunting was a liar, yet he would say that he was a very great "economist of the truth," for that he (the W. D.) had had this property through hands before, and there was nothing wherewith to make a settlement, and altogether, the W. D. said, a sovereign would satisfy the trouble he had been put to in the matter, for which he requested a P. O. O.

This, however, Mr. Bunting did not know; and now, the music of the valse having ceased, Jasper went up in a sort of you-be-off way to Mr. Bunting, and claimed Miss Rosa for the coming quadrille (Jasper couldn't waltz, at least only went round like a cart-wheel, and even that made him sick), and the fair lady and he were presently promenading together, the lady now smiling and smirking, and looking as if it was a regular case of *Perish Savoy!* with regard to Mr. Bunting's feelings. Admiration Jack, however, was on too good terms with himself to imagine it was anything but Rosa's natural kindness of disposition, especially as her great love for waltzing always made her gladly respond to his invitation to become his partner for them, to say nothing of the occasional interpolation of a quadrille—when the

figure, the Lancers for instance, was more than the other genius could manage.

And as gentlemen have not the same taste for cutting each other out that ladies have, Miss Rosa passed from one to the other throughout the evening, to the great amusement of the lookers on, who speculated largely on the result—O'Dicey backing Jasper heavily whenever he could get an opportunity; Miss Flintoff saying Rosa was a little whalebone-hearted thing, who did not deserve to have either; and many other ladies conspiring to run her down. Even in ringlets, however, she was decidedly the belle of the evening, and for dancing none of them could come near her, though Captain Ambrose Lightfoot did essay to spin his betrothed, Miss Laura Springfield, against her; yet Rosa held fast, and, guided by Mr. Bunting, distanced them immeasurably.

And now, we declare, here is old Sir Felix Flexible! Sir Felix, with his star and all complete, bowing and scraping, and acknowledging the marked attention he receives from everybody. Now O'Dicey steps familiarly up to him and slapping him on the shoulder, exclaims, "Holloa, old boy! how goes it? How are Philip of Macedon and all our friends in Greece?" O'Dicey tendering the baronet his hand, who almost involuntarily takes it, before he recognises his speech-stealing friend at the "Rocks," who, however, the baronet supposes, must be a proper acquaintance as he meets him at a Duke's. So Sir Felix vouchsafes him a little notice, and O'Dicey looks about in hopes that people see it.

First love valse and supper dance! Who shall describe the commotion caused by that announcement? The rushing for partners—the claiming of partners—the evasion of partners. Miss Beauchamp is so sorry, she really thought it was number eleven dance,—would Mr. James Green Foozle kindly excuse her? and then she goes off laughing with Captain Winfield. Now the Jug, who has been nursing a leg very carefully beside Mrs. McDermott, on a magnificent yellow and gold ottoman in the ante-room, suddenly lets it down, and rising offers her his arm, and Miss Rosa is only permitted to valse with Mr. Bunting on condition of surrendering to Jasper the moment it is over. Captain Ambrose Lightfoot claims one Miss Springfield, and young Mr. Netherwood the other; and all the engaged and semi-engaged ones, whom it is needless to enumerate, presently coalesce, and go spinning about like teetotums.

Courtship is something like stag hunting, of which few care to see the finish. The indifferent spectator knows that after the offer comes the church, just as the sportsman knows that the stag will be taken sooner or later—in a pond, a barn, a brickfield, any place that comes uppermost. It is the beginning—the uncarting—that people want to see. Neither is it perhaps necessary for us to follow the guests to the demolition of all the viands we described as getting gathered together, seeing that the whole affair was chronicled in the county papers in a

far more accurate form than we can pretend to—Mr. Cucumber sketched it out, the Duke filled it in, and the Duchess polished it off.

There used to be a funny fellow in the north of England some time ago, called Billy Purvis, a sort of half conjuror half play-actor, who found it his interest to occasionally give a performance for the benefit of some charity; and one day, after exhibiting on behalf of the Newcastle Infirmary, he presented himself to pay over the proceeds to the credit of the institution. The treasurer having counted the cash and thanked Billy for it, chanced to observe, as he was going away, "Perhaps, Mr. Purvis, you would like this to appear in the papers?" whereupon, Billy turning sharp round and spread-eagleing himself, exclaimed with astonishment, "Papers! aye to be shu-er. Why, whaat would be the use o' mar givin' it if it wasn't put i' the papers?" We often think honest Billy's answer accounts for a good deal of the philanthropy of this world. Where would be the use of people doing this or that, if it wasn't put "i' the papers?"

And so that there might be no mistake about the matter, the Duke always did his own reporting himself, letting the public know when he had a dinner, when he had a dance, when he had a *battue*, when he went from home, when he came back, and when, as in this instance, he had a grand ball. Of course the newspaper people did not sell him, as some of them occasionally do the quack medicine mongers, by putting "Advertisement" at the top of the paragraph; on the contrary, they let him have the full swing of the paper, as if he was really great "We" himself, a deception that was aided by occasional affectation of ignorance: as for instance, in giving a list of the guests, his grace would write "as far as we have been able to learn," or in reporting his own speech, the paper would have it, "the noble Duke spoke nearly as follows," as if the reporter had not been able to catch all he said.

Still, with a little allowance for a certain *couleur de rose* style, the accounts were very accurate, and on an occasion like the present embraced the variety of topics other than the splendour of the ball, such as the pedigree of the Prince, who "We" were sorry to hear was going away; also the cordiality of the Duke; the beauty and affability of the Duchess; the magnificence of the place; the success of the late *battue;* the staunchness of the hounds—winding up with a well-turned eulogium on the advantages of having such an exemplary family resident in the county, and the expression of the decided conviction of great "We," that such enlarged liberality would be duly remembered at the coming crisis—meaning of course the general election.

"That's diplomacy," said the Duke, as, having received the revised account from the Duchess and interpolated the passage about the departure of the Prince, he sealed the missive and dropped it into the letter-box for transmission by post.

CHAPTER XCIV.

MR. BALLIVANT AGAIN.

Our friend Mr. Bunting was soon enlightened as to the result of the Buntingbury Castle enquiry. The day after the memorable ball, as he was laying in bed feverish with excitement and with the ghost of a tune in his head, he overheard a colloquy between his valet and a voice which he presently recognised as belonging to Mr. Ballivant. Bonville was presently at his bed side with the ominous name written in the old unmistakeable characters on a small slip of not over-clean paper.

"Ballivant!" gasped Mr. Bunting, feeling that the long-delayed crisis was come at last. "Ballivant," repeated he, dropping the slip of paper down the bed-side—"Show him up stairs—get him the *Times* and tell him I'll be with him directly." So saying, our hero, bounded out of bed and extemporised a costume wherein to receive judgment.

"To be or not to be," that was the point thought he as he rushed into his trowsers, combed out his whiskers, and frizzed up his hair with both hands. Knotting the silken cord of his cerulean blue dressing-gown hastily around him, he threw open the door in the wooden partition that separated his bed-room from his sitting-room, and stood in the dread presence.

"Se-cuse my toilette," said he, bowing and advancing to greet him.

"By all means," replied Mr. Ballivant, rising and bowing.

"Have you breakfasted?" asked Mr. Bunting, pointing to the table equipage.

"Many hours since," replied Mr. Ballivant drily, resuming his seat by the fire, and at the same time, diving into his outside coat-pocket for the dread "Daftun."

Mr. Bunting took a chair beside him.

"I've brought back your book," said Mr. Ballivant, producing and presenting it to Mr. Bunting.

"Thank ye," said our nervous hero, receiving it.

"It is an illustration of the truth of the old saying, that if you will allow a man to use figures, he may undertake to prove any thing," observed Mr. Ballivant drily.

"How so," asked Mr. Bunting, fearing the answer.

"Because," said Mr. Ballivant, "Mr. Daftun calculates that if he

plants a tree it must necessarily grow and be of a certain size at a certain age, regardless of soil, climate, situation, and everything else, whereas nothing can be more fallacious, for the growth of one tree is no criterion for the growth of another, even on the same spot, let alone all the world over."

"Hum," mused Mr. Bunting, feeling it was too true. "Well, then, you think Daftun is wrong," observed Mr. Bunting.

"Certain he's wrong in this case," replied Mr. Ballivant—"Out altogther."

"Dash the Daftun," inwardly growled Bunting—thinking how often he had been thrown over by him. Mr. Bunting now thought he would have his turn, and throw Daftun over.

"Then how about the other property," asked he, after a short pause.

"The other property is very purty," replied Mr. Ballivant, "very purty for a single man's property, but it would hardly support the requirements of married life—not at least according to the high standard at which expectations are now pitched."

"Not if there's love on both sides?" demanded Mr. Bunting eagerly.

"I think not," said Mr. Ballivant drily, with an ominous shake of his head.

Mr. Bunting gasped for breath.

"The fact is," said Ballivant, *sotto voce*, "we have two strings to our bow, and can afford to be a little fastidious."

"I see," said Mr. Bunting resignedly.

"Not that I advocate mercenary matches," observed Mr. Ballivant, "but every day's experience shows one the necessity of prudence and caution."

"No doubt," replied Mr. Bunting, "no doubt—only when there is mutual attachment and tolerable sufficiency it seems hard."

"True," rejoined Mr. Ballivant, "true, only sufficiency is a thing that no one has ever been able to define. It is something like riches—a man considers himself rich enough when he has got a little more than he has. People want to begin life where their parents used to end it. Women are educated now solely for the ornamental."

"Well, but am I to understand that all this comes from the young lady herself?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"To a certain extent—to a certain extent," replied Mr. Ballivant. "The fact is, Miss Rosa places herself a good deal in the hands of her Mamma, who consults me, and ——" he was going to say, "takes my advice or not as she likes it," but he checked himself at the "and."

"And you think it won't do?" suggested Mr. Bunting.

"I don't say that," replied Mr. Ballivant. "I don't say that—it might do with prudence and economy—in fact, I have known many people marry upon much less, but then this young lady has

the option of a great deal more, and ——" here he checked himself again.

"Which you'll advise her to take, I suppose," observed Mr. Bunting.

"I don't say that either," replied Mr. Ballivant, "I don't say that either, but ——"

"It's a great temptation I suppose you think," continued Mr. Bunting.

"Undoubtedly it is," assented Mr. Ballivant. "Undoubtedly it is —nobody who scratches so grey a head as I do can be insensible to the advantages of money; but you had better see the ladies themselves— you had better see the ladies themselves," continued he, "and if you can arrange matters with them, I assure you I shall be quite as happy to draw your settlement as Mr. Whats-his-name." So saying, our visitor arose and tendering his hand withdrew, leaving our unhappy hero transfixed with depression. Mr. Ballivant made the descent of the tortuous staircase, regained his vehicle, was shut in with a loud slam of the door, and a shout of "right!" from sore-eyed Sam, while the sound of the wheels had died out in the distance, ere he awoke to a full consciousness of his situation.

"I'll go and see them myself," at length muttered he, ringing the bell for his breakfast, and, ordering a horse to be got ready immediately, he commenced the to and fro operation of eating and dressing at the same time. Having gulped a cup of coffee, and accomplished a half *negligé* toilette, careless cravat with dejected collars, but assiduous coat, waistcoat, and trowsers, he mounted Puffing Billy, and was presently urging him along at a pace that by no means comported with the horse's infirmities. In due time he arrived at Privett Grove.

Mrs. McDermott had anticipated his coming, and was on the watch to receive him. No castle no courtship being her fixed resolution, she greeted him kindly, but quite in the close-the-account style. After a little talk about the ball, she at once led up to the subject, by expressing her high opinion of Mr. Bunting's character, manners, and acquirements, but candidly stated that both Mr. Ballivant and she were greatly (cough) disappointed at the (hem) result of their enquiries; and Mr. Bunting knowing well where the shoe pinched, durst not try to combat the point. Chalker and Chargers, and Biter and Co's. bills, rose up in judgment against him.

"But you had better see Rosa herself," continued Mrs. McDermott, thinking to shift the responsibility on her daughter; and Mr. Bunting, glad to escape the now austere lady, readily sought the solace of Rosa's charms.

He found her in the drawing-room, elegantly attired in a new blue silk dress, with a plurality of small flounces, and either with a view of still holding him on, or from a desire of leaving a favourable

impression, she had her hair plain as it was on the eventful Pic Nic day, instead of in the Ringlets she had lately worn. Mr. Bunting at first looked upon this as a favourable omen, but our prudent young lady soon gave him to understand that though she had the highest opinion of him, and should ever think of him with the greatest esteem and regard, and hoped they would long remain friends; yet she would not think of acting contrary to her beloved Mamma's wishes. *Perish Savoy!* if she would. And not all the vows he made, or the sentiment he could muster, seemed to have the slightest effect upon her resolution.

Mamma, however, having timed them pretty accurately, came in just as, having exhausted his arguments, he was invoking poetry to his aid, when ringing for cake and wine, she sat down to her needle-work—the old Baden-Baden towel again—as if she meant to remain; and when that is the case the sooner the suitor goes the better. So without any extra formality our friend took leave, and just as he regained the gate who should come up but the Jug—the Jug in a bran new hat, blue frock coat, and fancy vest, with a mauve coloured tie, and mauve coloured kid gloves, mounted on Billy Rough'un', with Billy Button in a blue and yellow livery riding behind him. The Jug turned nearly mauve colour himself, for the day was chilly, and he had taken a stiffish glass of brandy to brace himself, which, coupled with his natural rubicund hue, worked upon by a guilty conscience, contributed to the effect. Mr. Boyston was much embarrassed, for he was just going to qualify as he thought, to be Mr. Bunting's stepfather, and ought perhaps to be saying something facetious on the subject, whereas poor Mr. Bunting was in reality going away, and would gladly have avoided the collision; so after sundry splutters at each other, and nearly knocking their horses' heads together in their anxiety to get out of each other's way, they passed and proceeded on their respective routes—Boyston for Elysium, Bunting for Burton St. Leger.

Arrived at home, he indignantly thrust his "Daftun'" into the fire, and summoning Bonville, desired him to prepare for instant departure. He resolved to go down into Renfrewshire and get rid of a property that brought him in nothing but grief and annoyance. Cushion it as he would the Castle would always rise up against him, and then when people had deceived themselves they talked and blamed Mr. Bunting, as if he had done it. He would be off and done with it; and Mons. Bonville having no predilections for Burton St. Leger—on the contrary, thought it a very uncivilised, unbilliard-tabled sort of place—readily seconded the motion, and presently had the valuable wardrobe in marching order; it being much easier to make a total flit than to pick and choose for a journey.

Crop, the groom, was ordered to return to town with the horses; but that worthy having succeeded in supplanting Sore-eyed Sam

with Rebecca Mary, intimated his intention of retiring from service altogether, and taking the Malt Shovel Inn, which was then becoming vacant; whereupon Mr. Bunting most generously presented him with the valuable animals, which Welter the blacksmith declared when Crop took them to him to shoe that it would be like robbing Crop to put shoes upon for they really weren't worth it. But whether they were worth shoeing or not they appeared to have been very expensive keeping, for Matty Muldoon, with the aid of his "missis," sent our hero up a bill that would do credit to Chousey himself. And having at length discharged all the obligations of life, Mr. Bunting again availed himself of Dr. Catcheyside's carriage, in which he reached the railway station in a very different frame of mind to that in which he had left it.

The first intimation Miss Rosa had of the departure was receiving in a pink lined envelope the familiar lines, beginning,

"Lovely Rose, farewell!
If ever fondest prayer for other's weal availed on high,
Mine shall not all be lost in air, but waft thy name beyond the sky," &c., &c.

But as the envelope gave no address, Miss Rosa was unable to return Mr. Bunting a beautiful pearl and amethyst ring he had given her—which, however, indeed she rather preferred keeping.

CHAPTER XCV.

MR. BALLIVANT ON RACING.

Mr. Bunting being now clear of the premises, Mrs. McDermott had ample opportunity of running him down, and expatiating on the providential escape dear Rosa had had from a penniless adventurer old enough to be her father. And ill-natured stories being at a premium, several accommodating gossips who could talk on either side, contributed their quota to the undervaluation. Altogether they made him out to be a very bad man, a shocking bad man in fact. Meanwhile Mrs. Goldspink and Mrs. McDermott kept up such a friendly intercourse that it was not long before Mr. Ballivant was wanted again. Rosa had brought the young banker to book, and there was a little preliminary arrangement to be done. The Jug, too, was ardent, especially on non-hunting days, and altogether matters were hastening to a climax.

Mr. Ballivant was one of the Ale order of lawyers, and united a little of the milk of human kindness with the stern leaven of the law. He had lived through the rise and growth of the present struggle for station, and did not consider great wealth and happiness altogether synonymous. Moreover, he was not particularly fond of old Sivin-and-four, still less of our young friend Jasper, whom he looked upon as a very idle boy. So when Mrs. McDermott broached the cause of Mr. Ballivant's coming, which indeed he knew pretty well without her telling, he made such a strong representation of the danger and profligacy of the turf, that he quite frightened Mamma as to the consequences. He would not advise her to let her daughter marry any one who had anything to do with it, certainly not a banker, who had such unlimited means of obtaining money—many people seeming to think it quite a favour for a man who issued five pounds to take it. And his arguments were so forcible that she quite came into Mr. Ballivant's view of the matter, and commissioned him to see and talk with young Plutus on the subject—not to say anything harsh, but to reason him out of it if he could—put it upon Rosa and her if Mr. Ballivant liked.

And Ballivant being thus armed, and having his chay at the door, forthwith proceeded to Mayfield, where he soon found Jasper engaged in his favourite game of skittles, with Tailings the turfite, at the Bear and Ragged Staff Inn. Having sent the barmaid into the skittle-

ground to say that a gentleman wished to see Mr. Goldspink in the "Moon," Mr. Ballivant patiently awaited Jasper's coming, which he was not long in doing, a summons from a stranger being rather

unusual with him; and Jasper half thinking it might be O'Dicey, who had promised to look him up the first time he was passing. Finding a lesser evil than he expected, he greeted Mr. Ballivant with the warmth of a repriever, saying he was very glad to see him, and asked if he would take any refreshment—a glass of sherry and a biscuit or anything of that sort.

Mr. Ballivant having declined his proffered hospitality, was presently button-holeing him with "Well, now, I dare say you know what I have come about, the matter of your marriage in fact. Well, then, you know I have nothing to do with your looks, or your manners, or

your figure, or anything of that sort, the ladies will please themselves on these points; but there is one thing I must strenuously urge and impress upon you, and that is, your immediate withdrawal from the turf."

"Why so?" exclaimed our surprised hero, thinking it was rather a fine thing to be connected with it.

"Because," replied Mr. Ballivant, "it is a dangerous pursuit, and draws you into low profligate company."

"I don't see that," said Jasper, biting his thick lips.

"Well, but I do," rejoined Mr. Ballivant; "and if Mrs. McDermott takes my advice she will not let her daughter marry any man who has any thing to do with it. Gambling and drinking are two insurmountable objections to matrimony in my mind."

"Humph," mused Jasper, thinking Mr. Ballivant alluded to his O'Dicey performance. "I don't think there is anything objectionable about the turf," at length observed he.

"Well, but I do," rejoined Mr. Ballivant, "I do; and I've lived a good deal longer in the world than you, and seen more of it, and I'll tell you what, I have never seen a low fellow get a gentleman into his power, without his sooner or later making him repent it."

Jasper was silent. Tailings was evidently the object of the observation.

"If gentlemen," continued Mr. Ballivant warming with his subject, "think to ingratiate themselves with the lower orders by affecting undue familiarity they greatly deceive themselves—the lower orders respect a man in proportion as he respects himself, and there is nothing they dislike so much as to see a man who ought to occupy the position of a gentleman demeaning himself by low associates."

"Tailings evidently," gasped Jasper, half inclined to resent the observation.

"It is not only the degradation, but the danger," continued his monitor. "These creatures keep everything they can get hold of that they think may ever by any possibility be turned to account, and years after an incautious note or letter may be produced with which you may be twitted and taunted nobody knows how."

"But you would not put down racing surely!" exclaimed our sporting hero.

"Well, no," replied Mr. Ballivant, "I don't say that, but there can be no possible occasion for you or I to support it. Leave it to noblemen and gentleman who have a direct interest in breeding good horses; but avoid the betting blackleg tribe as you would a pestilence."

"However," continued Mr. Ballivant, raising his formidable looking spectacles on to his broad forehead, and taking a good stare at Jasper, "those are my instructions—money matters I will arrange with your father, but upon this turf business I must be firm and peremptory. I never knew any good come of it. I have known a great deal of ill.

I never see a young man setting up a metallic penciled pocket-book, and sneaking round a street corner into what is miscalled a sporting house, without feeling that sooner or later he will be ruined—ruined —mind, body, credit and estate. It is only a question of time. If you want healthy excitement," continued he, "Why not hunt? That's a pleasant gentlemanly amusement. No man is more respected than Mr. Jovey Jessop, but you never hear of Mr. Jessop bellowing for odds, or scheming how to get money out of his neighbour's pocket. People like to send their sons out with Mr. Jessop, because they know they'll take no harm; but as to the turf, as the turf is at present constituted —its vice, its depravities, its atrocities,—I really think a man had almost better be under it than on it." So saying Mr. Ballivant clutched off his spectacles, and wheeled round for his broad brimmed hat, as he cased and put the spectacles into his breast-coat-pocket.

"Well now, then," said he, preparing to depart, "You'll be good enough to think over what I have said to you; it is with the wish and consent of the ladies, and that being the case, I'm quite sure it will be attended to." So saying, he tendered our hero his hand, and was presently back at the Hare and Hounds Inn, ordering his fly, wherein to return home. And Jasper thinking that Mr. Bunting was still to the fore, and having tasted the sweets of jealousy already, was obliged to attend to what was said.

CHAPTER XCVI.

WHO-HOOP!

LADIES are much more at home in the matter of matrimony than men. It seems to come to them quite naturally, whereas the men are generally rather shame-faced, and wish it well over. No one ever sees boys blowing off dandelion-down to try who is to be married first. A pair of top-boots has generally more attraction for them. All ladies have a wonderful tendency towards the orange-blossom. It is quite the fox's brush of female life. They like the fuss, the excitement, the shopping, the choosing, the matching, the ordering. One would think a bride had either had no clothes before, or was going to an uninhabited island where they were not to be got, so vast and comprehensive is the assortment. Then when the garments are gathered together, how the ladies come trotting to see the grand *trousseau*, just as interesting, we should think, as looking at a lot of well-littered horses standing in a stable in their clothes. But the fair see beauty in the frail devices, and think how elegant they will look when filled up with such a splendid figure as the bride's.

Then, as the happy day approaches, what anxiety there is about the weather. It is, perhaps, the only time when ladies really do care what sort of a day it is. They think of the bride and her beautiful dress, and her beautiful veil, her beautiful this and her beautiful that, and of the distance she will have to go from the carriage to the church.

Somehow weddings are generally favoured with fine weather—and we are happy in being able to state that our Heroine and Mamma were especially fortunate in theirs. A spring morning's sun awoke all parties to their duties, causing even the men to forego their objurgations at thus having a day spoiled—and cease their wonders at weddings not being in the afternoon. It certainly would be a great convenience if they were.

Punctual to a minute, Mr. Jovey Jessop had his Jug and his traps, boot-jack and all, in his dog-cart, and after an affectionate leave of the servants, who all agreed that Mr. Boyston was a very quiet gentleman who gave no trouble, Jovey set off with him as if driving to the meet of the hounds.

There seemed to be a general holiday throughout the country, and every house and cottage exhibited some little token of rejoicing, a flag, a streamer, a ribbon; some out of compliment to Mr. Jessop, some out of compliment to the Jug, some on account of the beef and ale they were going to have at Appleton Hall in honour of the event. As they neared Sleekfield turnpike-gate, they overtook one of those wretched attempts at finery, a job-carriage and four—the carriage a lack-lustre landaulet, the horses three blind uns and a bolter, the tawdry post-boys as unmatchable as the horses. Jovey and the Jug gave a view-halloa as they passed, and then let the inmates—Jasper and his worthy parents—see how much faster one good horse could go than four bad ones. So they arrived at Privett Grove in time to discard their wraps, and appear in much the same dresses as they did at the duchess's ball. Then the whole house presently broke out in an irruption of white—white dresses, white waistcoats, white gloves, white favors, white everything. Rosa looked lovely, and Mamma wore her years quite as well as she does in our frontispiece. Indeed some of the gentlemen thought they would just as soon be the Jug as friend Jasper. And all being punctual and pleasant the carriages were soon filled with crinoline, the gentlemen got into their various devices, whips cracked, wheels went round, while road-side bobbing and curtseying was again the order of the day. And the distance to Priestpopple church was either so short, or they went so fast that they seemed to be getting out of the carriages again before they had well got in. Some indeed thought they might as well have walked. For such a lasting ceremony, it takes a very short time to perform, and Mamma and Miss had both changed their names in the course of twenty minutes. Then the brides and bridegrooms having received the congratulations of their friends paired off together, a different arrangement had to be made with the carriages, which was effected at the church gates amid a salvo of silver among the by-standers. Then the return journey being rapidly made, the elegant breakfast was found ready, and the ladies had to be rechristened with a shower of champagne. Mrs. Boyston, your very good health! Mr. Boyston, yours! Mrs. Jasper Goldspink, your very good health! Mr. Jasper, yours, &c.

Then Sivin-and-four, and Mrs. Sivin-and-four's healths were drunk, and Sivin-and-four, unused to champagne, being rather elated, returned thanks in a dribbling speech, in which he told them how he had begun life very small, and how he was now a most substantial man, and advised every body to stick to the shop if they wished the shop to stick to them, adding, that if they took care of the pence the pounds

would take care of themselves, with other familiar sayings that we need not repeat. And the six bridesmaids and Mr. Jovey Jessop being duly toasted, and responded to by Mr. Jessop, who spoke most handsomely on behalf of both them and his Jug, the ladies presently withdrew, the brides to rearrange their toilets, the bridesmaids to see to the derangements of theirs; whereupon the gentlemen proceeded to empty the bottles, and drink the "single married, and the married happy," and finished by toasting the Jug and Jasper a second time. Then the carriages again appeared in the ring before the house, while the cording and bumping of boxes sounded in the passage, and the Jug withdrew to put on his boots, asking pretty Perker, the maid whom he met on the stairs, if Mrs. McDermott was ready? which Perker said was a bad omen. Mrs. Boyston answered the question by appearing in person, dressed in a beautiful pink bonnet with a white feather tipped with pink, and a brown moire antique dress with brown velvet round the bottom, when the gallant Jug having saluted her, helped her into her black velvet jacket, and then leaving her, said he would be ready in a minute. And when he returned he found Rosa—we beg pardon, Mrs. Jasper Goldspink—getting admired in her white Maltese lace bonnet with small white roses and orange-flower buds, and her well set out light lavender coloured silk dress surmounted by a large black Maltese lace mantle. The Jug with his hat being the signal for move, there was presently a great hugging and kissing, with a slight show of tears, and then the respective parties got into their carriages and away, the Boystons to White Rock House, the Goldspinks for the Dovecote Lane Station. And as the carriages departed, the half-fuddled, full-dressed gentlemen yawned and looked at their watches wondering what they should do with themselves.

The day was done. Privett Grove was closed, Mr. Jovey Jessop drove home alone, and our Banker and his spouse set off for their quiet quarters at Mayfield in a one horse chaise.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and sivin's eighteen, I don't know but I'd as soon the mother hadn't married," observed our man of money to his wife, as they jolted along.

"Oh, never mind, we can't have it all as we want," replied Mrs. Goldspink, "the money is sure to come sooner or later, and there will always be Garlandale for them to go to if they don't like the Grove."

"Sivin and four's elivin, and sivinteen is twenty-eight, money's very useful in this world for all that," replied the Banker, whipping the old horse into a trot, that presently brought them on to the rising ground overlooking their own familiar town, spire, town-hall, corn-market, and all.

CHAPTER XCVII.

WHO-HOOP AGAIN!

Our esteemed friend *Punch* says there are two things a man never forgets—his first love and his first cigar, to which we beg leave to add a third, namely, when he first heard that his banker had stopped payment. His banker stopped payment! What an appalling announcement! What a crash and commotion it creates in the country! How it spreads, reechoes, and reverberates, catching men in all sorts of ways; by sea, by land, by rail, on foot, on horseback, in their castles, in their counting-houses, seizing them in the side, depriving them of breath, freezing their feet, petrifying their faculties, almost stunning them with fear. They never forget where they first heard it, nor the way in which they stood gasping, calculating the consequences, considering how they would be hit, whether Fothergill's bill would have been paid in, Crossgrain's cheque presented, and how they should meet their own engagements. That recollection haunts them to the last, long after the adorable first love shall have subsided in a front, and the fume of the cigar become second nature. It was thought at one time that a discovery had been made for preventing all bank failures in future, and certainly, looking at joint-stock banking in a theoretical point of view, nothing can be more specious or plausible, though in reality nothing is more fallacious, the whole depending upon whether the directors are honest, and whether the proprietors are princes or paupers. So far from mitigating the evil, it has increased it tenfold, in consequence of the magnitude of the operations. And yet people go into them with all the confidence of security—believing the specious reports, and the existence of the mythical guarantee fund. Talk of the courage of facing an enemy, or Cardigan-izing a cannon,—what are such exploits compared to the courage of a man who deliberately risks his all in a concern over which he has no more control than he would over a run-away steam-engine?

So long as the beloved ten per cent. came rolling regularly in, all was right, and no questions were asked; nothing could be better than the Dibshire Joint-Stock Bank, and when word came that it had what is mildly called "closed," parties wouldn't believe it—must be a mistake—somebody had been late with a cheque, which of course couldn't be paid, and it would be all right to-morrow. Why, it was

open only yesterday, with its bright doors, shining counters, and goodly array of sleek clerks weighing and shoveling sovereigns about as if it was too much trouble to count them. But when the morrow came, and the blinds were down, the sovereigns silent, and an ominous notice — short, but most potent — on the closed doors, then indeed came weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Banks of issue interest the public according to the number of dirty five-pound notes in circulation, and as people always make the greatest noise about small sums, the failure of a bank of issue almost creates as great a consternation as the suspension of a joint-stock bank. Every man who has a five-pound note joins in the cry. Still, if ever there was a safe bank in the world, one would think it was old Goldspink's —established sivinteen hundred and sivinty-four—and worked with a caution that almost amounted to cruelty. No overdrawing — no interest allowed on deposit, no discounting without most approved names. O'Diecy might have waited a long while before they would have befriended any of either his or Mr. Wanless's paper.

In troublous times, indeed, a very trifling thing causes a panic, and makes a run upon a bank. During the great bubble year of 1825-6, a bank in the City was ruined in consequence of a butcher's pony falling down before the door just at the time of the high change, and the public mistaking the crowd gathered round the pony for a run upon the establishment. A rumour was raised, and a real run took place the next day. We are sorry to say that nearly as frivolous a cause produced as great an effect upon the old Mayfield Bank.

The reader will remember that Mr. Ballivant had insisted upon our friend Jasper's retirement from the turf, and by way of furthering the arrangement, had mentioned to one or two people that Jasper's race-horse Garlandale was for sale. Among others he told it to Mr. Kirby the veterinary surgeon, who told it to his cousin Armstrong the auctioneer, who, mistaking the "horse" for the house, asked Cordey Brown, mysteriously, what had happened that the Banker's new place Garlandale was for sale. Cordey asked Jobling, and Jobling asked Tulford the tipler, until the report reached Archey Ellenger's ears, who, hitting off the idea that there was something wrong at the bank, went about the country asking what was up, and intimating that people had better be looking after their money, for that Garlandale Hall, as he called it, was for sale, and wishing that this marriage mightn't be arranged for the purpose of making matters safe.

The news spread like wild-fire! Archey's suggestion speedily assumed the dimensions of a fact—Brown White told Bowderoukins that young Hopeful had been at his old games again, Bowderoukins told Meadowcroft that he supposed there was something wrong at Mayfield, Meadowcroft gave Captain Cambo a hint that all wasn't right at the old bank, and Cambo told Mrs. Cambo, who told somebody else; people ran to their money-boxes to see if they had any of the

familiar notes with a fat ox feeding at a hay-rick on the top, and the mark of many thumbings at the corner. The more the marriage was talked about the more the story circulated, until it culminated on the very wedding-day. As our Banker and his spouse neared the town of Mayfield, they were passed by several parties, unaccustomed to be there on non-market-days, who looked at him very differently to what they did when they came to ask for a little accommodation.

"Sivin and four's clivin, and sivinteen's twenty-eight—there seems to be a great many people astir to-day," observed our friend, seeing more travellers in advance.

"Going to give us a welcome, perhaps," suggested Mrs. Goldspink, as the bells of St. Margaret's church now struck up a merry peal.

The numbers increased—foot people, horse people, gig people, all hurrying onward—but not dressed in their Sunday clothes, nor looking particularly amiable, wearing much the same sort of aspect that farmers do when the "other-side" candidate comes into the market-place to canvass them.

"Sivin and four's clivin, and sivinty-sivin is eighty-eight—they seem very sour, wonder what's happened," mused our friend, as they now passed Jackey Brown and Cuthbert Donaldson, both of whom had recently had accommodation at the bank, and yet scarcely vouchsafed him a look—let alone a touch of the hat.

The Goldspinks had now got off the McAdam of the road on to the uneven cobble stone pavement of the partially grass-grown streets, at the corners of which groups of people were collected in earnest conversation, many of whom gave significant nudges and glances as he jingled up, evidently showing that he had been the subject of their discussion.

"Sivin and four's clivin, and ninety-nine's a 'undered and ten—never saw people so sullen before," observed our Banker, as he passed a group who scarcely deigned him a recognition. As he drove on, people followed the same way, and on getting into the market-place he found a crowd outside the bank-door clustering like a swarm of bees at a hive-mouth—all scrambling and fighting to be in.

"Sivin and four's clivin, and sivin 'underd and sivin is sivin 'underd and eighteen—do believe there's a run on the bank! Whatever can have happened," gasped he, driving rapidly up to the house-door, hurrying out his wife, and consigning the carriage to the care of the first passing countryman. He was in and through the house and into the bank in a minute. Then as he entered a Babel-like confusion of tongues arose, mingled with hisses and cheers, and derisive appellations, and the flourishing of dirty five-pound notes from equally dirty hands. The perspiring Scorer, the cashier, with an imposing wedding-favor on his breast, now turned and implored his master to mount the counter and endeavour to pacify the crowd, at the same time giving him a hoist up as he spoke.

"Sivin and four's elivin," ejaculated the Banker from his eminence.

"Nothin' o' the sort," roared Busby the baker, "two fi'-pun notes!" flourishing them as he spoke.

"What's the matter?" demanded the Banker.

"Wants our money!" cried half a dozen voices.

"You shall have it," replied the Banker, firmly.

"Out with it then!" cried several.

"Can't pay you all at once," replied the Banker.

"Nicely, if you like," rejoined several.

"You've been puttin' of your money away, you old scoundrel!" exclaimed a voice from the midst of the closely wedged crowd.

"Hooray for the old vagabond," shouted another; "we'll have him hung at the next Assizes."

"Rot ye, you're such a bitter old bad'un that if you were boiled into broth the devil wouldn't sup you!" exclaimed Rippon the rag man, holding up a dirty five pound note as he spoke.

"Just the man to rob a church, and not keep a prayer-book for his self!" roared Bagshot the besom-maker—from Rippon's side.

"You bloated aristocrat, you deserve to be drowned!" yelled Nat Skittles the pedestrian whister, who was star-ing it through the country.

"Come, old Ten-and-a-half per Cent., out with the tin!" cried Cordy Brown the butcher, putting his hand to his mouth as he spoke.

Then the hubbub increased, those who held notes wanting to be in, those who had got gold wanting to be out; and this kept going on, more or less violently, until every sovereign and Bank of England note was absorbed—when the old-established bank—established sivinteen 'underd and sivinty four—was obliged to succumb, and this owing to parties mistaking the name of a "horse" for that of a house showing

"What mighty contests rise from trivial things,"

as Mr. Pope sings.

A country marriage is a local thing, and unless parties advertise themselves in the London papers is generally confined to its own district, but a bank breaking is food for every newspaper in the land, and our friend Mr. Bunting soon read of it at his highland home—where the reader will be happy to hear that the barrenness of the surface of his property is amply atoned for by the richness of the minerals below, prodigious beds of iron-stone, coal, and lime being found on the spot.

Mr. Bunting's first impression was to throw himself—minerals and all—at Miss Rosa's feet; second thoughts, however, suggested that the ladies had been rather mercenary in the matter, and before he could arrive at any satisfactory conclusion the announcement of the marriages in the *Times* dissipated the delusion. He then saw through it all as clearly as possible, and required no Adolphe Didier or any ingenious invention to assist him. He wrote to the Jug, congratulating him on

his marriage, and sending him copies of a Prospectus of a Joint-Stock Company for working his Royalties, the Company having, by a curious coincidence, the very same W. D. who twice thwarted Mr. Bunting's matrimonial efforts, for Secretary. The W. D. now says that Mr. Bunting will be one of the richest men in Scotland, and can build a Castle or whatever he likes.

Garlandale, both house and horse, have been sold, and our substantial man considerably reduced in his circumstances. Jasper and Rosa live between the old people and Mamma's, illustrating the truth of the old saying, that there never yet was a house built big enough to hold two families. Perker carries war into whichever establishment she enters, and sadly laments the hero of the scarf. She thinks Admiration Jack was much more of a "quality gentleman" than Jasper, and feels that she was completely defrauded of Bonville the valet. Jasper had no valet to offer her, only Tom Tailings, a low fellow, who she wouldn't take if it was ever so.

The Jug, we are sorry to say, is not so comfortable as we could wish. Mrs. Boyston stints him of his drink, won't let him dine in his slippers, and wants him to make Billy Rough'un' go in the coal-cart. She also threatens him with the terrors of Sir Cresswell for desertion and cruelty—beating her on the preterpluperfect part of her person with his boot-jack. Altogether the Jug has made a bad investment, and we should not be surprised to hear of his being back at Appleton Hall to cut out Archey Ellenger, who has applied for the situation of Jug.

So Miss Rosa had better have kept her hair "Plain" than put it in "Ringlets," as the gypsy's prophecy was not fulfilled after all.

THE END.

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